

Horizon

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND ART

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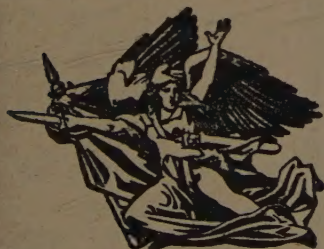
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JONATHAN CAPE

COMMENT

IN this number we print a suggestion for the enrolment of war writers to fulfil a function similar to that of war artists. But *Horizon* goes further and demands that dictatorial powers to clean up our language should be given to a Word Controller. War journalism and war oratory have produced an unchecked inflation in our overdriven and exhausted vocabulary.

The first act of the Word Controller (Mr. Shaw would be a good choice) should be to issue licences (like driving licences) to all journalists, authors, publicists, orators, and military spokesmen. Without such a licence it would be a criminal offence to appear in print or on the platform. The licences would then be immediately cancelled of all those found using the words '*vital: vitally: virtual: virtually: actual: actually: perhaps: probably.*' This surprise action of the Word Controller would at once eliminate most journalists and politicians, and all military spokesmen. These words should be unmolested, and protected, for several years. The words *democracy, liberty, justice, freedom, jackboot, serious consideration, island fortress, love, creative, and new* should be suspended for six months, and the licence endorsed of anyone found using them. Lists (constantly brought up to date) of forbidden clichés should be posted on every M.O.I. notice board, with a scale of fines which would swell the Treasury. The Word Controller, at any rate during the few hours of office before his powers turned his head, would be non-political. His aim would be to re-shape the English language to its original purpose as an instrument of communication, and an invention for expressing thought. Thus the expression 'The town is virtually surrounded' would become 'The town is or is not surrounded', 'vital necessity' would become 'necessity' and a scientific machine for weighing words would demonstrate that while such terms as 'coronary thrombosis' are as full of content as when first minted, other verbal coins are worn too thin for the public slot machine and must be withdrawn from circulation. As he became more autocratic and more like other controllers he would find out that there is a connection between the rubbish written, the nonsense talked, and the thoughts of the people, and he would endeavour to use his censorship of words in such a way as to affect the ideas behind

them, or, rather, he would give priority to statements of fact over abstractions, to correct facts rather than incorrect, and so on.

Thus he might pass 'the future of an army can be read in the faces of its officers' as a statement while censoring 'the future of the New Order in Britain lies in the aspirations of forty-four million people towards a better way of life', as a cliché, and suppress both in favour of some dull statistics. The Word Controller would reason as follows. England cannot win the war with its army. Russia's entry into the war has supplied our greatest deficiency, man power properly equipped, and resolved our greatest propaganda difficulty, lack of revolutionary aims and of a subversive revolutionary fifth column. If Russia is defeated the German attack on us, as their last obstacle, will be total and desperate. As long as America keeps out of war, and there is but small indication that Congress is likely to bring it in, all American help is bound to be insufficient. This is a psychological truth and nothing will change it. On the day that everyone in England carries their gasmask although there is still no gas, then everyone in America will unite in their war effort. Since Russia is in great danger, since American help, however generous, without compulsion can never (like voluntary contributions to hospitals) be quite enough, and since we are next on the list, there can be no reason for optimism or for any feelings except of gravity, and strict attention to the present. Yet the English tide of complacent wishful thinking sweeps us along faster than ever. The majority of the population, however much they are told not to, long for the days of 1939, and try to re-create them whenever possible. The minority occupy themselves with planning and reconstruction, with an England in which philistinism and vested interests disappear overnight, and where the laziness of the many and the piratical energy of the few—both deeply ingrained national characteristics—are equally overlooked.

'Let us in this splendid island keep as it were constantly burning before us the little candle of pure flame which shows that there are far higher ideals on earth than those of kill or be killed.

'But all the time summon up the muscles of the tiger to rid the earth of this pestilent Nazi horde.'

This is from to-day's leading article in the *Daily Express*. Submitted to the Word Controller the sentence would read: 'There are higher ideals than those of kill or be killed, but summon up

muscles to rid the earth of this Nazi horde.' And it expresses the dilemma in which the Western World has found itself since the war started. In the East, in Russia, China, Poland, Jugo-Slavia, Greece, everyone is able to love their country, however barren, their system, however harsh, enough to die for it. In the West some doubt if there is any country worth dying for, others if there is any worth killing for.

Seen in terms of art the Word Controller will remark that no great literature can be made out of this split-mind which is so prevalent. The unadulterated aggressive instinct creates its art; the detached and meditative attitude is also valid. Together they destroy each other and produce the hotchpotch of standardized, lukewarm, muddled propaganda through which we flounder to-day. An artist must be in the war or out of it. He must go to America or Ireland or prison if he wants to write, or else fight and read newspapers: the moment he becomes undecided, well-meaning and guilty, he is Hamleted out of service as a writer; however much he concentrates on the Atlantis of the past, or the Utopia of the future, he will be punished by the avenging Present, which is always unpleasant, and always unforgiving.

In the times in which we live a writer should not be able to put down more than two or three lines without making it obvious whether he has anything to say. The Word Controller, by banning the verbal camouflage of those who doubt, who waver, who are on the make, or who hope for the best, would clarify propaganda and leave literature safely where it belongs, in the hands of the abnormally sane, or the genuinely mad.

We are all prisoners in solitary confinement: when at last we give up trying to escape through mass emotion or sexual union there remains for us only the wall alphabet in which we tap our hopes and thoughts. Nobody should learn this alphabet who can abuse it, who jerry-builds the English language as if it were the English countryside, who wastes the time of his fellow prisoners by tapping out stale rhetoric, false news, or untranslatable messages, and so brings a perfect achievement of civilization to confusion.

R. S. THOMAS

HOMO SAPIENS 1941

Murmuration of engines in the cold caves of air,
And daring the starlight above the stiff sea of cloud,
Deadly as a falcon brooding over its prey
In a tower of spirit-dazzling and splendid light,
Pedestrian man holds grimly on his way.
Legions of winds, ambushed in crystal corries,
Conspiring to destroy him, and hosts of ice,
Thronging him close, weigh down his delicate wings;
But loud as a drum in his ear the hot blood sings,
And a frenzy of solitude mantles him like a god.

FRANCIS SCARFE

SUNDAY LEAVE

I stand in the roadway dressed in the drab of war,
Red hands, red face, battledress, cropped hair,
Carried away by this intricate fugue of roses;

Beyond the bleeding hawthorn the red and orange,
Scarlet and purple, pink and vermilion,
Cream and heliotrope roses with most pure ermine.

I am ashamed of my utter nothingness,
To be less than a man with nothing to do or show,
Who move no soul as mine moves to these flowers,

And am aware that the colour of my life,
Now I am learning death, is not so pure
As this pattern of blossoms by a cottage door.

But though I shall never win that pureness lost,
I share the grace of these flowers to see them bloom,
And feel, wherever a rose grows, there is home.

NORMAN CAMERON

THE INVADER

Our shops and farms wide open lie;
Still the invader feels a lack.
Disquiet whets his gluttony
For spoils he cannot carry back.

He calls for worship and amaze;
We give him yes-men in a row,
Reverberating that self-praise
He wearied of a while ago.

He casts around for some new whim,
Something preposterously more.
'Love me,' he bids; we offer him
The slack embraces of a whore.

This child of famine seeks for wealth
He's guessed, but cannot recognize.
Prowl as he may, we need no stealth
To hide it from his pauper's eyes.

And if he spitefully makes shift
To share with us his pauperdom,
By forcing on us as a gift
The shoddy wares he brought from home,

And watches that we sell and buy
Amongst us his degrading trash,
He gets no gain at all. Though sly
With what he knows, the guns and cash,

What he knows not, he cannot touch.
Those very spoils for which he came
Are still elusive to his clutch,
They sting and dodge him like a flame.

Invader-outcast of all lands,
It is his fate to gorge and crave,
To foul his feast with his own hands,
At once the oppressor and the slave.

E. J. SCOVELL

FOUR POEMS

THE GHOSTS

The days of our ghosthood were these:
When we were children, when we had no keys
We entered through closed doors, unseen went out again.
Our souls were the dissolved, ungathered, filtering rain.
Our bodies sat upon our parents' knees.

In the second days of our ghosthood
We went on foot among a multitude,
In time of drought, in our hard youth, we winter-born.
And those were visible to men as flowers in corn
Whose souls were eyes unseen that gaze from dark.

We entered flesh and took our veil, our state.
The third days of our ghosthood wait.
When we are stripped by pain, by coming death far-seen
Of earthly loves, earth's fruit, that came so late to hand,
With that waking or falling into dream
We shall not cross into an unfamiliar land.

DAYS DRAWING IN

The days fail: night broods over afternoon:
And at my child's first drink beyond the night
Her skin is silver in the early light.
Sweet the grey morning and the raiders gone.

MID-WINTER FLOWERS

Flowers brought out of darkness, white or bruised with shade,
Jonquils and Roman hyacinths, freesias with grassy leaves,
Show the end of the year in curtained English rooms.

As white as Christmas cakes, as frost on fir and yew,
They lean through windows to the sky's unlighted plains of snow,
The winter-patient gables in the nets of trees.

But when lights are lit they dress themselves freshly.
Like faint sea-weed that crisps and dances in the risen tide,
In air of lamp-light these preen and glow, colourless.

On the oak table, earth-islanded in their bowl,
Or stilled, a fountain, in their vase, they tell our year's midnight
And turn our thoughts to east with scent and cold of dawn.

TIME FOR SLEEPING

Do not look up. I will turn away soon.
The light is trained down on your book; your head
Shows lit yet, incandescent as the moon
Seems. What is still between us is not dead;

It sleeps and draws far in itself in dreams.
My thought and gazing, like a willow leaf,
Shallowly comb that deep; the surface gleams
Frayed now. My greedy consciousness and grief

Confused and anxious cry to love to wake,
To know itself each hour because life flies.
I think of war and death. You, for life's sake,
In our love's time for sleeping do not raise your eyes.

WHY NOT WAR WRITERS?

A MANIFESTO

THE rôle of writers to-day, when every free nation and every free man and woman is threatened by the Nazi war-machine, is a matter of supreme importance.

Creative writers, poets, novelists and dramatists, have a skill, imagination and human understanding which must be utilized as fully as the skill of journalists. They bring home with a depth and vividness impossible to the writer of a newspaper report or feature article, the significance of what is happening all about us, yet seldom to us ourselves or to all of us.

We all live in a very small illuminated circle and our work often loses much of its meaning because we do not see the relation of our every action to the conduct of the war. Books can implant this consciousness. A novel will create a picture which will not be effaced by to-morrow's newspaper. Books can, by reason of their larger scope, include many of the bad things which must be remedied beside the good things which must be made better. Books are less suspect than the newspapers, public estimation of which is very low.

At the beginning of the war, it was assumed that the function of the creative writer was to write a good book about the war . . . after the war. Experience of two years of war has shown to writers that their function is to write a good book about the war *now*.

When war broke out, many writers were hesitant. They did not see the issues as clearly as they had seen the Spanish Civil War, for example, or the last European war. *The Times* and other papers asked why this war produced no poets. The poets wrote essays on why they couldn't write poetry. The cultural front of writers was broken into dissentient groups of two and three.

With the invasion of Russia, feeling has crystallized. It is no longer possible for anyone to stand back and call the war an imperialist war. For every writer, the war is a war for survival. Without victory our art is doomed.

The Government also is discovering that it is making a

mistake in reserving the occupation of journalism but not of creative writing. During the Spanish War writers of international reputation such as Hemingway, Malraux and Silone exerted a deeper influence than journalists. Their propaganda was deeper, more humanly appealing and more imaginative than newspaper men had space or time for.

The Government distinguishes between war artists and war photographers. Both are reserved and the function of each is regarded as distinct. The first has to give a permanent æsthetic significance to the events of the war, the second a news or documentary significance. It would be logical to apply the same principle to writers as to journalists, and give them the same facilities.

As things are, however, writer after writer is called up, or seeing no possibility of using his special talents in the interest of his country, has volunteered for war service.

The demand for books about the lives which other people were leading, for accounts of experiences briefly detailed in the newspapers meant that many newspapermen started to write books. But just as, with the exception of Messrs. Priestley and Wells, novelists make bad journalists, so the journalists make bad novelists. They had the advantage, however, that their journalistic facilities enabled them to collect material.

This was the general picture; the men who could write the books couldn't get the material, and the men who could get the material couldn't write the books. There were, however, some notable exceptions (Leo Walmsley, John Strachey, J. L. Hodgson—Linklater was sent to Iceland).

The first principle, therefore, to be established, is: *Creative writers must receive the same facilities as journalists.*

Journalists are interested in the unusual. For creative writers, the sphere of interest is much wider. The everyday lives of people, the routine jobs, the small sacrifices are often more important because more universal than extraordinary events. For certain writers, however, action, danger and adventure are the greatest source of inspiration; for them the bombs, the submarine, the landing party, the battle front, the bomb-disposal squad. For others, organization, industrial growth, social welfare. Why are there no novels of value about the building of shadow factories, the planning of wartime services, the operation of, shall we say,

an evacuation scheme? Why are there no satires on hoarders, or the black market? Why no novels of army life? Because the writers who could write them either have the knowledge but not the time, or the time but not the knowledge to do so.

Before the war, both publishers and writers were constantly on the look-out for book subjects, and all that needed to be done was to find the author or raise the cash to write the book. To-day, subjects abound. But the author cannot get leave from his unit to write the book or, alternatively, cannot get the passes from the M.O.I. to collect the material. The second principle is therefore that—*Creative writers should be used to interpret the war world so that cultural unity is re-established and war effort emotionally co-ordinated.* Though the policy of any creative writer must have a longer term than this, he can meet the national need on the short terms of victory.

Newspaper articles are ephemeral and local. Books have a longer life and a wider circulation. Books can tell Americans, Australians, Canadians, Indians, Russians about the war in Britain, while most newspaper articles would be unintelligible.

Applying our first principle (that the creative writers should be given the same facilities as journalists) we argue that American and Russian poets, dramatists and novelists should be asked to come to Britain and find the material for their writing so that they can interpret to their peoples what is happening here.

Similarly, British writers should be sent to the Americas, the Dominions and Russia so that they can report back, by stories, plays and poems what is happening over there. There is an interchange of material aid; there are political and military alliances; there is a united determination that Nazism and Fascism should be crushed. So there should be a free cultural interchange of creative writers, to establish during war the international understanding that is the chief aim of peace.

In brief, therefore, we propose:

1. The formation of an official group of war writers.
2. Writers to be given the necessary facilities for writing their books.
3. The international exchange of writers to be encouraged and accelerated.
4. A proper proportion of these writers to be of groups most actively engaged in this war.

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CONTEMPORARY MUSIC IN WARTIME

ERNST KRENEK has lately revived the question as to whether it is possible for historians to navigate the main stream of music according to sociological currents, or whether these currents yield, at best, a guide to merely incidental characteristics in the work of one composer or another. The most satisfying relationship that can be drawn between music and the outside world is the purely practical one. Thus Edward Dent makes an interesting point, which others seem to have missed, when he says that after about 1650 there were two distinct types of fugue—the Catholic vocal fugue designed for the requirements of the liturgy, and the Protestant organ fugue free of all restrictions. ‘Mozart must compress his vocal fugues as concisely as he can, because the archbishop is gouty and does not like standing; Bach’s congregation will let him ramble away to eternity, because they may listen to him sitting down or can go out when they are bored.’ To this example

of practical necessity may be added the kind which compelled Monteverdi to write his later operas for much more meagre forces than the early 'Orfeo', Stravinsky and others to write chamber music when they had orchestral music in their heads, and which has at this moment decided one of our most talented composers to uproot one tuba, three trombones, two trumpets, two horns, and a kettledrum from a recent score of his because those who can afford to play what he has written, won't, and those who are more enterprising have an orchestra that is only the size of Haydn's in 1791. It is when we leave this defective and economic level that unmusical explanations of musical phenomena are of doubtful value. The works of Bach never tempt us to ask whether the times in which he lived were peaceful or restive. Nor can we guess from the music of Beethoven's middle period that his contemporaries in Vienna were overwhelmed by events which seemed just as catastrophic to them as the present war seems to us. It is certainly true that broad political changes are sometimes accompanied by changes in musical thought. But if we are told that Bach's endless lines belong to the age of despotism (together with the grandiose terraces and the roof paintings which suggested infinity) we are still in no position to appreciate the organ Toccata in F major; and if we realize that the Mannheim crescendo and the more natural ebb and flow of excitement in Mozart were symbols of the rise of the middle class, we may still be unable to grasp the full beauty of the C major pianoforte concerto, K. 503.

Since September 1939, our energies have been greatly absorbed by the task of reorganizing our concert life so that the benefits of music as a solace and an entertainment should be widely felt, and new activities spring up where others had been quenched. Concert givers have clung obstinately to the past, and above all to those items which for forty years have been hideously overworked; audiences have wished, not unnaturally, to be sustained rather than challenged by the music they heard; and the claim of living composers to any serious regard seems to have been forgotten as completely as that curious instrument the arpeggione, for which Schubert wrote a charming and lightheaded work before its hasty consignment to the museum. None of this is surprising; but I think it leaves the critic with an obvious duty, which is to concentrate as well as he can on the achievements and tendencies

which can be discussed without reference to the general upheaval. Not only have these been neglected, but history tells us that the musicians of the future will know many of the works now being written; that they will not study them concurrently with a map of the world in 1941; and that they will not be very interested to consult innumerable files, or some monstrous new 'Geschichte des Concertwesens', in order to acquaint themselves with the sterling activities now in evidence from Rake to Penygroes, from Howde to Prestonpans.

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But before making a few notes on recent works I would like to add a further introduction—a graph, however arbitrary, of offensive and counter-offensive in English music since about 1890. It was then that Parry's first grandiose choral works were appearing, and that we can imagine prophetic persons telling one another that the renaissance had begun. If we read contemporary critics we find those in sympathy declaring that Parry 'brought all heaven' before their eyes; whilst others were best represented by Bernard Shaw, who said that Hampden would have paid any assessment of ship-money rather than sit out 'Judith' a second time. The question as to Parry's genius was, in the end, irrelevant. Together with Stanford he cured the native hopelessness which Handel's popularity had inaugurated, which Mendelssohn's and Gounod's had deepened, and which the decisive audience in this country had ensured from the beginning by their belief in everything that wasn't English. His example, though not his artistic achievement, may be compared to some extent with Walt Whitman's in American literature.

If Parry produced his finest music in setting Milton and Donne, Elgar first served his apprenticeship as a choral composer and then wrote a series of orchestral masterpieces which proved that brilliance need not be unheavenly, and that absorption of contemporary Continental thought might again enrich English music as had done before Handel. Elgar gave the younger musicians a second world to explore, and a professional attitude with which to explore it. But his influence was met by another which was rooted in Cecil Sharp's collection of folk-songs and which many hoped would found a national school of composition on a homely basis.

In the greatest periods of music the popular and the sophisticated idioms have been closely identified. There is no change of level in Schubert's C Major Symphony, for example, to show when he is refurbishing the calls of Viennese lavender women and when he is being entirely himself. But the important thing is that Schubert and Beethoven did not collect alpine tunes and street songs and then study their contours and rhythms; they heard them wherever they went, and absorbed them as naturally as the music of Haydn or Mozart because they were 'contemporary'. Clearly the English folk-song movement could not replace these conditions. In structure, in harmony, in melodic outline, the Viennese popular music had been a simple and plebeian counterpart to the works of the great Viennese composers. The material of English folk-song, on the other hand, was hardly more contemporary with the music that English composers were writing than the old ballads are with modern poetry; and its most beautiful and characteristic qualities tended to obstruct large-scale thinking.

These obvious limitations could not be ignored by the best composers of the younger generation; and spurred on no doubt by the success of *Faade* and *The Rio Grande*, they began to look more intently abroad for their models. English music in the 1930's reflected almost every strain of Continental thought, but with an air of appropriation, not of dogged discipleship. Thus we find Arnold Cooke establishing himself as a temperate outpost of the unswerving Hindemithian empire: Lennox Berkeley engrossed with French idioms, but with room for Tschaikovsky without Tschaikovsky's self-indulgence: and Benjamin Britten being swept overboard by Mahler, yet not submerging his own personality for an instant. In relation to twentieth-century English music Britten may be said to have Elgar's technical acumen without either his pomp or his intimacy, Walton's potential appeal to a wider audience without his lyricism or his pressure, an indifference to folk-song, and a facility that is at least the equal of Stanford's. This facility has been greatly suspected, because it seems to be the sign of an imagination that is too thoroughly at the composer's command. But there is no reason why every concerto or song-cycle should take as long to write as *Bouvard et Pécuchet*; and I do not think we can accuse a young composer of gross fertility if, with an astounding natural gift, he pours out music at one-sixth the pace of Mozart. The only test we can apply is to ask

whether this facility is, in Tovey's phrase, 'a condition in which the artist's thoughts have no chance of maturing'.

I am tempted for a moment to compare Britten's case with Walton's, not for the purpose of contrasting two personalities, but rather two types of creativeness which belong to the different conditions which faced the young composers of the 1920's and 1930's. In comparison with all the things an artist says to himself in producing a considered work, the most encyclopædic criticism may seem to him vague and ill-directed. The pain and effort which Walton evidently spent on every bar of his music amounted to more than 'consideration'; but its effect was invaluable because, after allowing the post-war tension an easy outlet in *Façade*, he made it yield positive results in five or six works of great integrity and concentration. No other individual works by our young composers have compared with these; but the point I am anxious to make is that we should approach the less tightly-wrought music of the 30's with a patient eye to the future. Walton's handful of masterpieces do not necessarily imply a marked development in his thought, and indeed none of the later works seems to rival the viola concerto of 1929. Britten's compositions, on the other hand, may achieve a high rate of mortality for several years yet; but his general production seems to be coming nearer and nearer to a period of maturity in which, I think, the advantages of an abundant output will be felt, as they invariably have been in music more than in any other art.

The only new work of Walton's that has been heard here since war began is *Duets for Children*, though I should say that the children who might be able to solve its difficulties of rhythm, pay attention to its phrasing, and put a bold face on some of its harmonic progressions must be few and anything but young. The music seems rather flat at first as though Walton had not been able to limit his intensity of expression without deteriorating in his use of language. This criticism is discarded, however, as the *Duets* are better known. The imaginative effort lies in the variety of the ten pieces, which are as vividly remembered as the scenes of a cleverly produced play; and in the precise weight of emphasis, which is gradually appreciated as a brilliant way of providing children's music for grown-ups as well as grown-up music for children. In addition, Walton has written an Overture for the Chicago Orchestra, and a violin concerto, also for America. I think

the concerto needs a little definition, and will therefore quote some remarks by Herbert Elwell, the critic of the Cleveland Plain Speaker;

‘This composition leaves one with an amiable if somewhat troubled impression of sweetness and obscurity. The sweetness springs from tenderly expressive lyricism combined with optimistic whimsicality in the subject matter. The obscurity results from crowding detail and, one suspects, from a conflict between virtuosic and purely musical ideals.’

There is also a comment upon ‘metrical irregularities that convey nervous agitation rather than strongly rhythmic outline’; and if one thinks of certain passages in the symphony and in the viola concerto there seems no reason to suspect that these statements say less than the silence they replace.

Whether or not Walton enlarges his view from one work to the next, he does change its direction; and the great difference between his larger instrumental works and those of Edmund Rubbra is contained, I think, in the remark that ‘character in itself is plot, while plot is by no means character’. Rubbra seems at present to be concentrating exclusively on the symphony, but so far he has produced a somewhat endless tapestry in three formidable lengths, rather than three separate compositions. The quality of the thought is admirable; there is nothing slipshod, and nothing that is not pre-eminently his own. But so long as he tends to indulge in serial methods, to use the orchestra as a receptacle, and to overlook some of the necessities of good showmanship, I doubt whether the finest of counterpoint will keep each of Rubbra’s symphonies alive for more than a year or two. On the other hand the five new Madrigals, to words by Campion, are well contrasted and have a rhythmic interest of which the symphonies are sometimes starved. There is no doubt of Rubbra’s mastery in writing for voices; it is a medium in which he works with instinctive intelligence, as is shown especially in the settings of ‘*When you are young*’ and ‘*Beauty is but a painted hell*’.

The transition from Rubbra to Lennox Berkeley is violent. Berkeley by comparison is a light composer. Yet his output during the last two years has been impressive, and includes a symphony, a Serenade for strings, an Introduction and Allegro for two pianos and orchestra, a string quartet, a sonatina for recorder, some

ongs, and four piano studies. I have not seen the symphony, but among the other works there are at least two very memorable achievements: the first movement of the sonatina for recorder and piano, which is warm and delicate and always blowing up for a surprise; and the slow movement of the string quartet, which seems to have been produced in a single sweep of improvisation, and in a more profound spirit than any of Berkeley's previous music. Such a group of works provokes endless comment: the inventive pianoforte writing, the quick movements ranging from a arrulous chromaticism to an almost 'Figaro'-like vivacity, the general clarity and understatement as an antidote to the sheer dullness of much of our 'worthier music'; all these deserve discussing. But instead I want for a moment to consider Berkeley's attitude to 'sonata form'. Like many of our younger composers he still clings to its broad relationships while having to dissociate himself from the play of tonality which originally produced them. In its milder aspects, twentieth-century harmony is a means for avoiding a platitudinous melodic outline while preserving the civilized contours to which the world's greatest music has accustomed us. This seems true both of Berkeley's politely evasive disorders and of Hindemith's fourths and sevenths. If we think of Tovey's statement that 'the purport of sonata-music is an experience combining the range of architecture with that of drama', it becomes clear that in contemporary works the two elements are not perfectly balanced. The fact that sonata form in modern hands is no longer a direct expression of functional harmony does not mean, however, that the form is derelict. If Berkeley can produce music in which the stress between his own idiom and the classical he seems to result naturally in creative details, I can see no reason why he should not continue to produce it. W. McNaught has said that 'the older composers earned the world's appreciation, which was not necessarily musical appreciation, by using a medium capable of significance in simplicity'. It is illogical to wait for another great period of music in which that situation will be repeated. The complications of twentieth-century thought may find satisfactory expression in unpredictable forms, but more probably in variations and syntheses of those we already know; and it would certainly be premature to decide which present-day tendencies are negative, and which not.

Arnold Cooke's music is only just beginning to win recognition.

His style is less animated than Berkeley's, less weighty than Rubbra's; it is steadied by contrapuntal habits that are never allowed to flourish to excess. Until recently, there were still various progressions and punctuations which paid too much homage to Hindemith's *Konzertmusik*; but a separate personality has begun to emerge, expressing itself first in one or two slow movements of lyric beauty, and now in a pianoforte style that has lost its lumpiness and is as free and appropriate as Berkeley's. His latest works include a viola sonata, where special problems are managed with an unruffled skill; some settings of Shakespeare sonnets for soprano and strings; a 'cello sonata in which certain passages reflect the influence of Bartók's 'Mikrokosmos'; and a piano concerto with sterling themes, a strong sense of design, and a solo part that is most exhilarating to play.

In making these notes I thought it better to concentrate on special areas of achievement rather than to patrol the length and breadth of contemporary English music. Such composers as Christian Darnton, Elizabeth Maconchy, and Victor Yates might well have been included; but my choice of subject matter was further influenced by the fact that while in certain cases published scores and manuscripts were available, in others I should have had to rely on the experience of a single performance, or on no experience at all. Before returning for a moment to Britten I must, however, mention two works of Alan Rawsthorne's: a Theme and Variations for string quartet, and a setting of 'Kubla Khan' for chorus, orchestra, and two soloists. What I remember of the Theme and Variations is the range and vividness of effect, and a mixture of austerity and exoticism that is typical of his style; and of 'Kubla Khan', that Rawsthorne sometimes succeeded in matching the enchantment of the poem (particularly in the orchestral interludes), but that in many details he had seized on a purely theatrical interpretation and seemed indifferent to the urgent flow of the words. But such impressions are bound to harden when there is no chance of renewing contact with the music; and I do not wish to attach very much value to them.

Of Britten's most recent works, only *Les Illuminations* and the violin concerto have been heard in England. In *Les Illuminations* Britten rushed headlong where Frenchmen had feared to tread; but once we had allowed that Rimbaud should be accompanied by thunderbolts or complete silence, the music itself could be enjoyed

as the best Britten had so far produced. The writing for strings was of an order that could not be attributed merely to technical skill; the musical formulæ were sometimes as electrifying as Schubert's; and the whole song-cycle was planned with an air of infallibility which made us accept the inclusion of two instrumental pieces containing only the words 'J'ai seul la clef de cette parade savage' as a severely orthodox proceeding. I think there is no doubt that Britten's imagination takes a more masterful flight when confronted with the treatment of words than when he can indulge in instrumental fluency. *Les Illuminations* is a good example; the first movement of the *Ballad for Heroes* was another; and I shall be surprised if the operetta he has just completed on the subject of Paul Bunyan does not bear out a suspicion which some of us have had for a long time, that he ought to write voluminously for the stage. The instrumental works are less mature. In the *Diversions* for Paul Wittgenstein and orchestra Britten exploits the possibilities of writing for the left hand with a resource and concentration that are creative in a sense; but neither here nor in the violin concerto has he achieved many bars of music that seem to result from an experience that really mattered to him.

In examining his general style, what we notice at once is a melodic outline that is wiry as well as feverish, and a sense of orchestral colour that is separatist like Mahler's but operates almost as a self-contained unit, not, as with Mahler, in conjunction with a contrapuntal habit of thought. It is inevitable that in his present state of development, and with his technical freedom, the concerto form should attract Britten's less serious qualities. But as I have already suggested, the ratio between flair and solid thinking is very different in the vocal works; and there is a new *Rondo alla Burlesca* whose vigour seems to promise an advance in the instrumental field as well. All in all, there is no reason to set any limit to the hopes we may entertain of this young composer.

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I began by saying that political upheavals do not affect the character of contemporary music. It is obvious, however, that they may cause migrations which leave certain areas 'musically barren' where they had been fertile; and the latest example of this has been the influx of nearly all the leading European composers

to America since 1933. Such an event could not fail to rouse controversy, the strength of which was reflected about a year ago in some remarks by Roger Sessions, the philosopher and statesman of American music. He maintained that the demand for 'national art' is a defensive attitude, and that great composers have been great because they expressed themselves as men, without questioning their digestive capacities. He also said that a nationalist music does not consist in evoking scenes or landscapes, but that a nation is rather the sum of a great many efforts towards goals which are 'essentially human and not parochial'. Other articles in *Modern Music* surveyed the problem from a European standpoint. Paul Nettl foresaw a second generation of immigrants that would be completely Americanized, but added that he thought the U.S.A. would find its true mission as another Alexandria, preserving the culture of the past and providing a paradise for elderly subscribers and musicologists. Ernst Krenek, on the other hand, spoke of European symbols of continuity as something which he had been able to give up with a fairly light heart, and of new conditions as affecting his use of apparatus but not his musical intentions. This assertion of independence is typical, no doubt, of the 'first generation'; and it will be very interesting to see how the various attitudes contained or implied in this paragraph will resolve themselves into a future American or 'Western', music.

Meanwhile we can think of Bartók's latest works without bothering very much whether they were written in Budapest or Buffalo. In the last few years he has produced a series of masterpieces which express his personality more completely than ever before: his personality as a Hungarian, as an unflinching pioneer, and as a musician who has assimilated the European tradition from Debussy back to Bach. One of these works, *Mikrokosmos*, stands apart from the rest. For pianists it is a modern 'Gradus ad Parnassum', progressing in the course of 153 piano pieces from five-finger exercises to advanced Bartók. For musicians in general it is a notebook in which the elements of his style are clarified; and in which various formulæ, detached from the more subtle processes of the bigger works, are developed with a wonderful grasp of the forces inherent in each of them. *Mikrokosmos* is, therefore, a kind of 'Companion' to recent Bartók, while the new Divertimento for strings is a valuable introduction

This Divertimento has been played here with great success. The tactical use of discord is the same as elsewhere—to prevent the melodious outline from sinking into a comfortable bed of late nineteenth-century harmony. The directly expressive use is seen in those stinging progressions which occur usually just before the return of the theme, so that the theme is felt as a deliverance rather than as a climax. But since it is, after all, a 'divertimento', the effect is never as bitter and unsparing as in some of his more concentrated works. The violin concerto and the sixth String Quartet are harder to understand. In the concerto the contrasts between turbulence and serene poetry are sometimes difficult to reconcile. In the Quartet, the close weaving and lack of dramatic gesture belong both to Bartók's increasingly polyphonic style and to a conception which needs its own isolated means of communication. I have said a few words about each of these new works, partly because the scores were available, and partly because I have come to believe in Bartók more than in any other living composer. He has had no conspicuous imitators, so that his style has not become cheapened; and he has always something urgent to say in a language that has been evolved with ruthless integrity.

I think it is right to suggest some idea of evolution in Bartók's works, as against Stravinsky's, for instance, which are like a series of phenomena. Stravinsky's genius consists as much in the unique problems he sets himself as in their solution. Of his new symphony in C major, Sol Babitz, in the *Musical Quarterly*, has the following things to say. (1) The manuscript is very white. (2) The recapitulation in the first movement is a mirror-like reflection of the exposition. (3) The third movement includes a minuet, a passepied, and an 'audacious' fugue whose subject is in unequal bar lengths, whose inversions and augmentations are as integrated as those of Bach, and whose general development has a 'splendour difficult to describe'. (4) The work ends with a procession of low chords, whose imperceptible changes suggest a conflict between movement and immobility. This procession also represents, in a concentrated form, the harmony of the whole symphony: 'the simultaneous use of a C and G chord'. It is evident, from the musical examples, that the sound is never condite. Stravinsky has also given some lectures at Harvard, on Russian music, the creative process, art as a realm of necessity

and not of freedom, and the general æsthetic proposition that the 'work makes the material, and not the material the work'. Other Europeans have been teaching regularly—Schönberg at the University of California, Krenek at Vassar College, and Hindemith at Cornell. I have not heard of any new Schönberg works in the last two years, although the violin concerto was played in Philadelphia to an impatient audience. Krenek has written a symphonic piece for strings, a 'Little' Concerto for piano and organ with chamber orchestra (for Vassar College), and an operatic play called *Tarquin*. Hindemith's new works include a clarinet concerto written for Benny Goodman (who also commissioned Bartók's Contrasts for violin, clarinet and piano, composed in 1938); an organ sonata consisting of three choral preludes, whose varied treatment and cool beauty make them very enjoyable to play; and a cello concerto which opens with one of the most loutish rhythms in the whole of music, and ends with a March and Trio that are as regular as clockwork.

Having qualified the first paragraph of this article, I must now do the same with the second. The exceptions to the general neglect of contemporary music have been Boosey and Hawkes, who have published a whole stock of interesting new works; Sir Henry Wood, whose 1940 Prom. programmes were as lively as the present ones are deadly; and the Cambridge Theatre Concerts, which gave first performances of Bartók's Divertimento and of Lennox Berkeley's second string quartet. What is needed is the courage to play new works repeatedly; and the gradual realization of the fact that contemporary music consists less and less in creating an atmosphere in which the natural listener cannot breathe. This tendency is spontaneous in the younger composers who have not been through the central crisis; it is doubly significant in those who have.

A. J. A. SYMONS

THE DINER-OUT

Somewhat he lisped for his wantounesse
To make his English swete upon his tonge;
And in his harping, when that he hadde songe,
His eyen twinkled in his hed aright,
As don the sterres in a frosty night.

Chaucer: Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*

AMONG the half-forgotten dinner-parties of the past, one feast, still lingering in the memory of one survivor, deserves a record. It was given fifty years ago, in 1891, in a different world. Less than twenty-five years before the cataclysm of 1914, when bombing aeroplanes and Lewis guns proclaimed the adolescence of a new age, England was still unmechanized, unmodern. Throughout the length and breadth of the country, ancient villages nestled in a half-isolated dependence upon local labour and agriculture, with a large proportion of inhabitants who had never seen a train. Three-volume novels were still read in rectories, and had not quite disappeared from publishers' lists; loo and whist were the popular card-table games. It was a world of towns still lit by gas and warmed by coal, a world of lace-caps for old women and long hair for young ones, of horses, hansoms, traps, victorias, landaus, cabriolets and gigs. The sails of windmills everywhere revolved. In many ways it was to the eye a more delightful world than ours, but perhaps to the spirit it was less consoling. A cobweb of conventions imposed the duty of appearing respectable upon every class except the criminal. The revolution which has since swept those taboos away was so largely silent that an act of faith was needed for the present generation to realize how strong and unquestioned the restrictions were, or how unlike ours were the eyes through which the Victorians saw their universe. To them life was full of certainties; now we are only sure of change. They seemed to know what was right and wrong economically, socially, morally; whereas we stand undecided before socialism and private enterprise, before contraception and the Church, and a dozen other dilemmas. But, though we have lost the Victorian

certainties without finding our own, we have at least women's emancipation from their codes and rules; women no longer wear corsets, men silk hats, as matters of course; gentlemen may engage in trade, ladies dine in restaurants, without any loss of general esteem. Even in 1891 there were hardly half-a-dozen public places in London in which a lady of good position would have consented to dine unless the dinner was specifically a public one. The place for private entertaining was the home; and it was a mark of the unconventional in Frank Harris that when he entertained the Princess of Monaco, it was at Claridge's Hotel rather than at his house in Park Lane.

The right to flout conventions was, indeed, one of the consolations of the curious position which Harris at that time held both in the world of letters and in that richer world which regarded a career as a mere substitute for an invested income. To the first he was known as an aggressive, unacademic American who, having established himself and the *Evening News* at the same time, had since given unwelcome proof of further ability by brilliant editorship of the *Fortnightly Review*. To the second, he was the husband of a wealthy, elderly widow, a man of profuse and florid eloquence, known and even slightly 'up' in political and city circles, who gave excellent dinners and told tall but equally excellent stories, mainly about himself. His intimates knew him as a persistent and unabashable lover of women, to whose affection the malicious declared, he really owed his start and his success; but even those who most disliked him could not deny his powers of conversation, or wide knowledge of literature and the world. By his own account, which is still uncontradicted, his family was Welsh, his birth Irish, and he ran away from an English school to an adventure in America. There, after being in turn bootblack, river diver and store-hand, he made money 'rustling' cattle as a cowboy in the West, and got himself called to the bar in Philadelphia. He could talk for hours, in the most broad-minded (and broad-mouthed) fashion, of strange doings in Russia where he had been war-correspondent; Brighton, where he had been schoolmaster; and Heidelberg, where he had been a student of philosophy. And he was believed, partly because of a ferocity of manner which implied that he would not brook contradiction, partly because his appearance bore his stories out. Dark, thick-set, heavily moustached, with hair kept close to the skull, and booming, by

not unpleasant, voice, he looked and sounded like a mixture of lion-tamer and pugilist, and dressed like a parvenu millionaire.

Nevertheless, or perhaps necessarily, he was popular; and no one looked less like a self-educated cowboy than Frank Harris at the head of his own table. Nor were his guests such as a cowboy would invite. He had an insatiable liking for the company of men of letters and intellect, to whom, not less than to Lord Randolph Churchill, he would offer rich meats and rare wines in an unstinted hospitality. And it was a company of men of intellect that he gathered to do honour to his friend the Princess of Monaco, the grand-niece of Heine, and even more a patron of artists than of art.

Unfortunately, the names of those who assembled at Harris's bidding, to meet her as she flitted through London are long since lost. But it is at least remembered that among the guests was George Moore. No longer a young man, nor yet middle-aged, but, like his host, on the hither side of forty, Moore also was a well-known figure in the Bohemian society of that time. He has himself described, in delusively frank phrases, his abortive attempts to be either painter or poet, his yellow hair, sloping shoulders, and the twisted course by which he found his style and his soul. In 1891 he was already a remarkable and marked man, who had introduced Realism and Emile Zola to English readers, and was himself the author of novels banned by the libraries, and an autobiography praised by Walter Pater. These circumstances combined not only to give others a good opinion of him, but also to give Moore a good opinion of himself; he was accustomed to the centre of the stage, even if he had to behave outrageously to get it. So it was with all an Irishman's resentment of a rival for the ear of the audience that he nodded when Frank Harris, directing his attention to a late arrival, murmured in a whisper heard all round the room, 'I think you know Oscar?'

He did indeed; half London knew Oscar Wilde by sight or by repute; but George Moore knew him personally, and knew him with dislike. They had parted in dudgeon at their last meeting some seven years before, and exchanged no word since. Yet their paths seemed parallel lines; both were writers, and almost of an age; both were Irish; they had moved in the same set in Paris; both had known Whistler as an intimate. The ostensible cause of quarrel was the rivalry of their brothers, both journalists; but its

roots went deeper. Moore detested Wilde's appearance, which was handsome in a heavy, unexpected, unfathomable fashion. The two men made a queer contrast. Moore was slight, athletic, clear-skinned, giving an impression of careful and abstemious life; whereas Wilde, full-fleshed both in face and frame, large-headed, deep-jowled, thick-lipped, looked even more than his six feet, and wore an almost aggressive air of joyous and commanding self-indulgence, which was emphasized by his carefully-curled hair, bulky form, and heavy-lidded, slanted eyes. Between them was an instinctive opposition of physical types, but beyond even this lay an antagonism of artistic intention. Wilde was the self-appointed prophet of the truth of masks, the apostle of an esoteric romanticism of outlook, the spokesman of a fashionable preciosity which prized the artificial and its implications. Mere reality he dismissed as unimportant, and boasted that his only novel, published the year before, was 'as beautiful as a Persian carpet and as unreal'. Moore, on the other hand, was at that time a ramping realist, who valued above all things fullness and honesty of observation, was actively at war with conventional restrictions of language and theme, and completely out of sympathy with unnecessary or exotic pretence.

It was, therefore, quite without enthusiasm that he found himself facing Oscar Wilde at dinner. Cursing Harris's tactlessness, he engrossed himself with his neighbour. Conversation circulated with the wine. But it never became general. From the first Wilde set himself to thaw his fellow-countryman, and as the meal went on his infectious laugh and modulated voice seemed to sound more and more clearly as gradually his neighbours, and then in turn theirs, fell silent to listen. Even Frank Harris, at the end of the table, ceased to roar reverberantly; presently the whole company followed the example of its host, and sat without speech while the bulky Irishman talked. A chance word seemed to give the cue for the smoothed, rounded, polished, punctuated phrases which flowed from his deliberate lips. Good humour marked every word, frequent smiles lit the lidded eyes. Unfortunately, Wilde's themes that night, like the names of his listeners, are beyond the reach of memory; but from the records of similar occasions we can speculate on what was said. Did he perhaps recount the adventures of Charles Augustus Howel, that picturesque charlatan who so impressed Ruskin, Swinburne, Rossetti

and Whistler by his talents that each engaged him as confidential secretary, and so fascinated each by his charm that his bare-faced roguery was time and again forgiven? Wilde liked to dwell on characters who pointed the contrast of criminality and success; Howell, the man 'with green hair, whose touch was paralysis', and Wainwright, the artistic poisoner, were among his favourite topics. Or did he talk generally of the forces that make personality, of the 'absolute dependence of the spirit on certain physical conditions', and the effect upon man's external life of some hidden inner secret? Or was this one of those times when he relied upon an elaborate story, told in sentences which seemed 'as if he had written them all over night with labour' and yet were spontaneous, such a story as that of the village romancer who charmed his fellows with descriptions of the green dryad he had seen combing her hair in the woods, of the faun with the human face that had spoken with him as he passed, and other decorative fantasies; until, returning on a day when he had actually seen the wonders he had so often described, he could find no answer at all to the usual, expectant inquiries, and was stoned by his disappointed audience!

Whichever of his many topics, or techniques, of conversation Wilde employed that night, there is at least no doubt of the result. His hearers were enthralled: all the vague distrust created by his heavy fleshiness and ostentatious dress vanished in the magical impression of his words. So long as he showed any inclination to continue, he was prompted by tactful interventions; and when at last, with a wave of the hand, he fell to silence, further talk was felt to be an impossible anti-climax; instead, the whole party gathered round to praise him for an astonishing, memorable evening. No one had resisted his spell; Harris was profuse in thanks, the Princess pressed him to repeat their meeting, and even the recalcitrant Moore, walking home to his bachelor chambers after the dinner, wondered at the excess of folly by which he had put himself off for so long, with so little reason, from such delightful company.

Extraordinary personal triumphs of this kind had been the central circumstance of Wilde's life for more than a dozen years. In his early manhood his eccentricities had inspired a comic opera, and many more or less ill-natured caricatures; but gradually his vagaries had been forgotten as he gained an ever-increasing audience and reputation by his brilliant talk. From being the lion

of a season, he had become an established social figure. At some of dinner tables he held listeners spellbound by witty improvisations, which had to be heard to be believed, but were soon repeated when heard; and his presence at a party had almost come to be a guarantee of its success, for his confidence seemed to be swelled rather than diminished by numbers. Invitations, the pleasantest form of flattery, were showered upon him by strangers as well as friends. Yet his admirers were by no means confined to the idlers who are grateful for entertainment. It was to the intellect, and the intelligent, that Wilde most appealed: men of letters and artists succumbed to his charm as readily as fashionable hostesses.

In part, this was due to his constant good humour and lack of malice, tact in choice of subjects, and almost telepathic sensitiveness to his listeners' moods; but perhaps what counted even more was his bubbling vitality and (once the first impression, which was sometimes unfavourable, had worn off) his physical prestige and confidence. He seemed thoroughly in accord with himself. Most men, when they come in maturity to consider their position in the world, and their own natures, are dissatisfied with one or both; but Wilde appeared to be living a life which contained every element that he desired, and none that he did not.

It was the life, in effect, of a philosophical man of fashion, in position as paradoxical as his creed. He had revived in his own person the dandyism of Georgian days, and never appeared save in the most formal, or elaborately informal, costumes; his success may be measured by the name 'The New Oscar', given to the haberdashers to his special form of collar. Impressively attired he was unfailing at first nights, private views, concerts, and all the occasions when it is less important to see than to be seen. For this at least, there was a well-established precedent. In every generation Society has its favourites, who lead and follow it at the same time, occupy themselves largely or exclusively with trivialities and yet remain men of real ability and character. Brummage, Lytton, and D'Orsay are examples. But Wilde carried the process much further than any of his forerunners, and made explicit what they had implied. Those who knew him well were made to realize that over-careful dress was almost the least of his dandyism. He appeared to have subdued his existence into a pattern, a formula of elegance lacking at no point in dignity of style. He was never

off parade; not even when he laughed at himself, as he constantly did; even his handwriting displayed a conscious beauty of form. His most casual utterances were framed in witty flashes, in sentences suited, if not designed, to bear the test of print. His tall, narrow house near the Embankment, though not the residence of a rich man, was very obviously that of a man of individual taste. In one respect at least he showed exceptional judgment; his wife's flowerlike good looks should not, he insisted, be stultified by the fashionable bustle; and so she appeared at tea parties in flowing gowns of soft-shaded Liberty silk, startling those to whom Paris was the only source of taste. Her very engagement ring was specially made to an intricate design of his conception.

This elaborate life seemed the natural expression of an integrated and harmonious personality. No one was long in his company at that time without sharing an assurance of his ultimate success, or admitting that it would be well deserved. Even his wife believed him to be a great man; and this view the world, which had laughed at him for ten years, seemed on the eve of sharing. His latest work and first novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, issued the year before in a monthly magazine of large circulation and good standing, had arrested popular and critical attention, as no other of his writings had done. It had been widely reviewed, with the disparagement that stimulates sales, and the praise that precedes them. Thousands who had previously known his name merely as that of one of *Punch's* butts, were impressed or repelled, and sometimes both, by his exotic parable of the life and death of one who lived only to procure for himself the sharpest and most exquisite sensations, and who, finding them both within and without the confines of artistic experience, sought 'to cure the soul by means of the senses, and the senses by means of the soul'. Reprinted in exquisite and unusual form, with a cover designed by Charles Ricketts, it was taken as the avowal of his creed; and by many his creed was taken as the truth. There was, he preached, to be a new Hedonism, in which life itself would be a medium for art; man's task was to realize himself completely, to develop personality to its utmost pitch, to neglect no corner of his nature. The highest life was a civilized one, in which joy and beauty took the place of truth and goodness; indeed, life, in his view, was simply a desire for expression, which art offered various modes of attaining. The whole attitude was summarized in the axiom

that it is more important to be somebody than to do something; and his victorious nature seemed to justify this doctrine. To those who met him then, with success warm in his grasp, he seemed an astonishing, romantic, almost Renaissance figure, an artist in attitudes who had chosen his own pose. Only a few of his closest intimates realized that he wore a mask, not, as he pretended, for its beauty, but because he dared not let his face be seen.

A. J. A. SYMONS—1900-1941

TWO PERSONAL NOTES

I

WHEN my brother was twenty years old one of his most favoured amusements was the recitation of poetry before a small, selected audience. He would ask members of our family, notably my two other brothers, my sister and myself, to go into the front room of the house in Clapham in which we lived; the blinds would be pulled down or the light turned out, and he would recite one of the many longish poems which he knew by heart: I remember particularly 'The Bells', 'The Raven' and 'The Sphinx'. His voice was not then the finely-toned instrument that it became later on, but it was deep, powerful and expressive: expressive enough to disturb me (I was eight years old) and leave the scene marked on my mind—the dark room, with furniture and figures faintly visible, and by the fire his taller figure moving a little, speaking slowly at first, and then fast and faster as he reached the poem's climax.

My brother's character changed as he grew older. In his thirties he no longer recited poetry, or no longer recited long poems; his admiration for the verse of Poe and Wilde was much modified (though he still thought Poe 'the most original creative writer of the nineteenth century,' and defended Wilde skilfully in verbal argument); his voice grew richer, his articulation distinct and slow; the young man who flew model aeroplanes, and sailed model yachts on Clapham Common pond, and drove

an Indian motor-cycle along Brighton front with a passenger standing on the footboard at the back, became the dandy with many wonderful suits and ties, the collector of musical boxes, mother-of-pearl card cases and Victorian glass paper-weights, connoisseur of wine and food, co-founder of the Saintsbury Club, president of the exclusive Sette of Odd Volumes, clubman and diner-out; yet that glimpse of him at twenty reciting poetry in a darkened room is characteristic, and even revealing. I do not think that he ever valued 'The Raven' or 'The Bells' highly as poetry; but he was moved by the dramatic element in them, and he looked for this dramatic element in life as much as in literature, in his own life as much as in the life outside him. He approached life in his early twenties with a highly-developed and conscious feeling for style: it would almost be true to use of him the vulgarism 'a self-made man', in the sense that he created his habits, his tastes, and even the name, 'A. J.', by which he was generally known. His model, or one of his models, was Disraeli. He set himself to achieve a success which, like Disraeli's, should be both social and literary; and that success, within limits, he perfectly obtained.

His childhood was not uninteresting, but it was uneventful; and uneventful is still the word for the youth of reading and practice attempts at writing which was followed by enlistment in the army at the age of eighteen. The war ended before he saw active service; and in the years after the war, until 1922, when he and Max Judge founded the First Edition Club, he still did little but enlarge his education. He read books and made a few literary friends; he gained some knowledge of good furniture at the auction rooms which my father owned; he was restlessly inquisitive about twenty different subjects; he invented and played all sorts of odd games, chief among them the Race Game and the War Game.

My brother retained an extraordinary interest in games of chance and skill until the end of his life, but he never gave to any other game the absorbed attention that he gave to the War Game and the Race Game at this time.

I believe the War Game was invented by a military friend; it was played on a contour map of as large scale as possible, with pieces to represent infantry, cavalry and guns. The deciding factor of every move was the throw of dice; but so elaborate were the

refinements of the game, so carefully had it been constructed to give purely local importance to a series of fortunate throws, that a good evening's play of four or five hours might result only in the destruction of a battalion or the loss of two or three guns.

The Race Game was A. J.'s own invention. It was played by A. J., my two other brothers, and several friends, and was as far as possible a complete simulacrum of horse racing, with owners, jockeys, horses and betting; there were handicapped races for two-year-olds, three-year-olds, four-year-olds, selling platers; owners went into bankruptcy and their stables were sold up, horses went to stud, a list was published at the end of the season of leading owners, trainers and jockeys; there were even reports of each race written by A. J., who was, I believe, the most successful player.

When he became director and secretary of the First Edition Club at the age of twenty-two, he made many friends quickly. One of them has told me of his astonishment on going to a First Edition Club dinner in 1926, and finding the Club, which three years before had been struggling for existence in a single room in Pall Mall, now able to give a dinner at the Savoy attended by Lord Birkenhead and other notables. How was this transformation effected? There is no single or simple answer: but it was effected wholly by A. J. and partly, there can be no doubt, by the power and charm of his personality. He drank much wine at this time, and became yearly a better judge of it; he developed a natural dandyism, qualified by fastidious good taste; he studied handwriting, and became a brilliant amateur forger (for a bet he once successfully forged the name of his friend Maurice Healy on a cheque); he began to collect Victorian curiosities; his powers of conversation and argument came to full flower. I know too little of his life in those still formative years to write about it; they were years in which he did little writing—an essay on Baron Corvo, another on Edgar Allan Poe, another on Emin Pasha, an introduction to a collection of 'nineties verse—but he emerged from them a complete and rounded character.

A complete character: but not a literary character. He never wrote easily; 'I have always been a careful, but also costive, writer, to whom, for reasons which I more or less see, the act of composition has always been accompanied by more pain than pleasure', he says in a remarkable eight-page letter to one of his doctors;

and literature offered neither the quick and certain monetary return that he required, nor, except at long range, the social contacts that had become essential to him. So, although he published a short *Life of Stanley* in 1933 and *The Quest for Corvo* a year later, he never became fully, or solely, a writer. He gave part of his energy to perfecting his conversation, so that every phrase ran easily and grammatically; part to the pleasure he found in social life; part to the collection of musical boxes and other curiosities; much, in the last years of his life, to the development of the Wine and Food Society. He had always been out of sympathy with most of his literary contemporaries; and he approached their work, and the work of a younger generation, with half-serious and half-assumed distrust. 'Auden,' he said to me, 'how do you regard Auden? I saw *The Dog Beneath the Skin* the other day and it seemed to me really rather—good?' But such self-deprecatory gestures were made rarely, perhaps never except in conversation with his family: more often he employed unconsciously as defence-mechanism his skill in empirical argument, which was turned against the whole of modern literature, from Joyce and Proust to Eliot and Auden. He set up against present-day literature, and what seems to some of us as necessary violence and disorder, the concept less of an ivory tower than of a closed study: you need not retire from the world to write, he would say, but you must at least sit quietly in your own room. Perhaps it was not bad advice, but it was advice he was little able to follow.

It would be very wrong to regard his fine red-brick house in Essex, with its excellent furniture, its dozens of musical boxes, Victorian panoramas, peepshows, card cases, glass paper-weights and obelisks, as an example of the operation of a defence-mechanism merely: these things, like his appreciation of wine and his formal and stately literary style, were part of that complete character I have referred to, which was his best creation. It is nevertheless true that they did not wholly satisfy him: and he looked forward always to that day when, with an assured income sufficient to fill all material needs, he should be able to sit at home in his garden and write. It was a day that never came.

The day that did come was a sad one. The war destroyed at a stroke almost the whole of his considerable income. That might be in itself, as he eloquently said, not a bad thing; now he would

be compelled to live in the country and write to earn a living. But within two months of the start of the war he was attacked by disseminated sclerosis, the disease which afterwards killed him. He recovered slowly from the attack; and as he recovered he made literary plans. One was for a book of the African explorers Burton and Speke, and their discovery of Lake Tanganyika; another was for a part-biographical, part-autobiographical book on the Tennant family. He wrote six chapters of the first book, two brilliant chapters of the second. But the rare malady from which he suffered had attacked the brain: his mind was as clear and sharp as it had ever been, his conversation still delighted his friends; but he was easily fatigued, and found concentration for any long period of time very difficult. He turned from Burton to Tennant, from Tennant to write a sparkling essay on Theodore Hook, from Hook to the book on Wilde which he had begun a long time before, from Wilde back again to Tennant. We had many conversations at this time about writing, and his writing; when he left London to live in Essex we corresponded a good deal. The experience of illness made him, for me at least, a most amiable and interesting companion and we were perhaps more close together, in interest and feeling than at any other time in his life. His interest in literature and in contemporary writing, returned with a freshness he had not shown for years; and his delight in the good reception of his articles on Wilde in *Horizon* was touchingly boyish. 'My Wilde at Oxford has had a strong effect on the critics,' he wrote to me. 'Connolly has asked for more, on the ground that he will never get anything as good again. I have answered that I have no intention of dying yet, and that his conclusion is therefore premature. . . . He was delighted also when *The Quest for Corvo* was published as a Penguin: every new letter of praise gave him pleasure and made him more resolute to resume most earnestly the literary career which had been interrupted now for almost five years. The threads were in his hands: but he could not take them up. During 1940 he had lived very quietly and simply, and his health improved: as soon as he put any strain on his constitution, it grew worse. 'The long and exceptional summer was of course a great help to me,' he says in the eight-page letter, written in March the year, already mentioned. 'I spent most of my time in the open sitting and taking my meals and working at a table in the sheltered

courtyard at the back of the house. I took very simple fare, and led an extremely easy life. Gradually I enlarged the extent of my walking, till by August I could manage ten miles. . . . I seemed so much recovered that I began at this time to lead a life more nearly normal—that is, normal for me, which includes fairly regular enjoyment of wine, though an almost complete abstention from spirits. Matters remained thus until about a month ago, when circumstances imposed on me a week of uninterrupted activity—visitors here, dinners in London, successive late nights. I lived at stretch for exactly seven days. On the eighth I found myself completely exhausted.' In July I went down to see him in Essex and found him gravely ill; he had to be moved to a hospital at Colchester that week-end. It was characteristic that, although able to speak only with difficulty, he asked for six copies of his *Penguin Corvo* to be put in with other necessities, so that he could give them to the nurses; characteristic too that in the few weeks he was in hospital he made his doctor a personal friend. 'I have taken my doctor's cellar in hand,' he said slowly and gravely. 'I have told him that it will pay him to keep me alive simply to look after his wine.' He retained a buoyant optimism, and went on making plans, until the end.

In thinking of my brother's life, so bitterly cut short, it is difficult to refrain from the motion of regret that other interests should have taken him so often away from writing. He wished always, rather grandly, to be remembered as a writer; and the memorial he has left in his books is that of a man of talent, but it does not at all adequately convey the power and brilliance that was apparent to his friends. But his power was, after all, not fully that of a man of letters, though it was emphatically that of a man of culture. His life was too broad, the sweep of his interests too great, ever to have been compassed in the channel of writing he had chosen: an insatiable curiosity worked in him which led him to seek, and gain, knowledge of such various subjects as Africa and the stock market, roulette systems and legal procedure, the quality of wine and the origin of money: and if these interests drew him away from writing they made the impact of his personality extraordinary, fascinating and impressive. Many of his friends know more about his personal talents, as they were exerted in society, than I do; and I hope some day they will tell what they know. But I at least never came in contact with the full

force of his mind without feeling that by comparison with him I lived a very tepid and narrow life: and this joyful interest in : many facets of living, and the power to communicate that interest by means of his rich and stately conversation, will remain, I think, his best memorial.

JULIAN SYMONS

II

ON a day in the autumn of 1922 I was walking along Pall Mall East, musing, in all probability, upon the trials and pitfalls that beset a book-collector, when some instinct prompted me to raise my eyes to the level of the first floor windows on the opposite side of the street. As I usually walk through the streets with my eyes glued to the ground it was a fortunate departure from habit for, in white letters painted across two windows I read the strange legend, 'The First Edition Club'.

I was suffering from an acute attack of Bibliomania at the time which manifested itself chiefly in a desire to possess First Editions of books published in the 'nineties and in the first decade of the twentieth century. And I had long regretted that there was no proper guide for the ignorant collector, from which he could distinguish the sheep from the goats. So I eagerly crossed the street, entered the house, and walked upstairs. At the top of the rather dark stairway I was confronted with a door, which I seem to remember was unopenable from the outside, for my next recollection is of a door being opened and of myself being looked at, rather suspiciously I thought, by a long narrow man dressed in a lavender suit of very advanced cut and wearing a pair of outsize tortoise-shell-rimmed spectacles across an impressive nose.

That was my first meeting with Alphonse James Albert Symons, or, as he named himself and was always called, A. (or Ayjay, according to fancy). My first impression of him was disappointing. My idea of a bookish man was a rather untidy, dreamy person, possibly with a beard, but certainly with an unbrushed coat and baggy trousers. I could not believe that the spruce and exquisite young man posing as a bookworm could be anything but bogus, and I approached the impending interview in a spirit of scepticism.

I was decoyed into a room lined with books and containing

large paper-littered desk in the centre, and was made to sit down while the aims and objects of the First Edition Club were explained to me. Right from the beginning I was to be given an example of the form of specious and fallacious argument of which A. J. was such a master. He produced a slim grey volume entitled 'Bibliographical Catalogue of the First Loan Exhibition', and explained that this was the first of the many books which were to be published by the First Edition Club. It would undoubtedly become very rare. The price was two guineas, which was ridiculously cheap for a book definitely destined by its very nature to be valuable in a very short space of time. But, and mark you this well, to *bona-fide* members of the First Edition Club the price was but a paltry guinea.

Furthermore, the subscription to the First Edition Club was also two guineas, but to purchasers of the precious tome aforesaid this sum would be reduced to one guinea. So that from whatever angle one looked upon the matter, by joining the Club and buying the book one was putting a clear two guineas into one's pocket and taking ruthless advantage of A. J. A. Symons's good nature and lack of business sense, which was clearly ridiculous.

A quarter of an hour later I had become a member of the First Edition Club and went away firmly clutching a copy of the Bibliographical Catalogue, and nursing a feeling of having in some way got the better of the First Edition Club.

Many years afterwards I heard several different stories, both from A. J. himself and from others, as to how the funds for starting the First Edition Club were originally raised. A. J.'s own story was that after the last war he found himself demobilized with no apparent future and turned his mind immediately towards the problem of acquiring some capital of his own. He discovered that there was an alarming shortage of typewriters in England: few businesses were paying £25 for second-hand typewriters and £50 for new ones. So A. J. imported a vast quantity from Canada, half of which he sold at a profit of 100 per cent, the remainder fetching little over cost price. The actual number of machines imported varied from a dozen to a shipload according to the audience to which the story was told.

Another story was that he took a lease of offices in a building that was subsequently pulled down, and refused to move out until he had received enormous compensation. Here again there was

wide discrepancy in the figures quoted, which varied from £ to £7,500 and in one case even rose as high as £10,000. I believe the actual figure was more like £750.

I saw a good deal of A. J. during the next three years, but it was not until 1926 that I got to know him really well. By that time he had got the First Edition Club into good shape. He had moved it to Little Russell Street, with Dr. G. C. Williamson as President, and Dr. Williamson got him elected a member of the Sette of Odd Volumes, of which I was also a member. A. J.'s election to that society is a definite landmark in his literary and social progress. Indeed they may almost be said to have started from that point. It was there that he met Maurice Healy and André Simon. It was there also that the foundations of his now famous bibliography study *The Quest for Corvo* were laid.

There is a rule of the Sette of Odd Volumes that every member must, within a short time after his election, 'make a literary, scientific or artistic contribution to the Sette': A. J.'s contribution took the form of a short paper read to the other members and their guests, entitled 'Frederick, Baron Corvo'. This study, read in October 1926, was immensely successful and was subsequently printed as one of the highly-prized opuscula of the Society. *The Quest for Corvo*, published nearly eight years later, was an elaboration of this. At the time of his death he was President of the Sette, having been elected the year before the war.

Out of A. J.'s friendship with André Simon grew the Wine and Food Society and the Saintsbury Club. Both these institutions owed their success very largely to A. J.'s energy and personality, though the original idea for both came from André Simon.

I do not wish to say too much about A. J.'s gastronomic activities, as it was chiefly as a literary man that he regarded himself. Besides, in such a short sketch it would be impossible to give a just account of what A. J. did for the appreciation of good food and wine in this country. He set himself out, not to persuade people to eat large expensive meals but to make them understand how to prepare and enjoy simple food within the reach of everyone. And he certainly did a very great deal to improve the standard of fare in English hotels and inns: indeed he provoked a great deal of hostility from hotel proprietors who resented people acquiring culinary knowledge which, from the proprietor's point of view, they were much better without.

A. J. was much interested in finance, particularly very involved in finance, and many stories are told of his complicated transactions and the many schemes which he prepared (but seldom carried out) for making a fortune. Some were so intricate that no one could understand them at all. They were nearly all based upon a firm belief of his that objects were much more important to him than money or securities. Indeed, at the beginning of the war he would stand before the fireplace in the drawing-room of his house at Finchingfield and, waving his hand in a characteristic circular motion, would say: 'I am really extremely rich. I am surrounded by very valuable assets which are untaxable. A millionaire may find the tide of finance turn against him. But musical boxes, mother-of-pearl counters, books—all those present untold wealth.'

This argument did not stand up to criticism, but he was convinced that he was right.

A. J. was an expert conversationalist, and looked upon conversation as one of the fine arts. But he would only talk on subjects upon which he was an expert. He was no dialectician. If a conversation was started upon some subject of which he himself was ignorant, he would divert it in the most skilful way into a subject which he understood. Art, for instance, was a closed book to him, particularly modern art, which he despised, and yet his library was particularly rich in books upon Art in all its forms. Music was also a subject of which he knew nothing, though he could recognize any of the vast number of discs which he amassed for his collection of musical boxes.

The collection of musical boxes was always rather a mystery to me. It was the least interesting of all his many collections. He loved by-gones and toys and trinkets of the Victorian era, because he loved good craftsmanship, particularly craftsmanship of a kind which has fallen into disuse. Millefiori paperweights, expanding peep shows, prismatic glass obelisks, transformation boxes, mother-of-pearl card-cases and other similar objects filled his house at Finchingfield in Essex. And, of course, books, particularly books.

He was always very interested in other people's collections and eager to add to them. He never entered into competition with other collectors. If he thought that someone else had a much better collection of any particular object than his own, he would rob his

own collection to improve the other. Of course he expected the compliment to be returned, and would become very indignant if someone told him he had seen a cheaply-priced musical box for instance, and had not thought of buying it.

His taste in clothes was exotic. Rainbow-hued ties, pale suits quite unpractical in London, red trousers and finely tailored shirts delighted him. At one time he must have spent a fortune on clothes. He would pay £3 or £4 for a shirt and once when I told him that I never paid more than a guinea for a shirt he was genuinely shocked. And he was quite distressed when he found that I possessed only two pairs of cuff links.

He might almost be said to have collected clothes as he would anything else that interested him. It was part of the 'nineties background against which he liked to picture himself. He once told me how bitterly he regretted the passing of the frock-coat, particularly the grey frock-coat which, worn with a grey top hat, would have suited him admirably.

The outbreak of war brought A. J.'s elaborately constructed life down about his ears in ruins. The First Edition Club petered out, the gastronomic societies automatically suspended most of their activities for the period of the war, and he himself became gravely ill of the malady which eventually carried him off. His illness weakened him considerably, though it did not affect his mind in any way: the symptom which worried him most was that his speech became rather slow and slurred, and he could no longer broadcast on the wireless, which was one of the things he liked to do most. And of course he was prevented from doing any active war work. He was full of ideas of culinary economy which might have proved very valuable to the rationing authorities if he had possessed the necessary energy to develop them, but the war rather made him lose heart.

'I have constructed my life for peace,' he said to me. 'Not for war. This war has destroyed all that I have worked for, and even when the war is over it will be difficult to build it up again.'

It was terribly sad to see the depression which came over him occasionally during the last months. Hitherto, everything had worked for him and he himself was an uncompromising optimist. His energy was so great that he did not in his heart admit that he would ever die at all. Once, when we were about to cross the road in Holborn, he waited until there was no traf-

within a hundred yards before venturing forth. And he said to me: 'It would be a thousand pities if a piece of carelessness on my part should result in the curtailing of my otherwise unendable life.' It was also part of his optimism that he never lost his temper. At least I never saw him do so. I have seen a look of irritation in his face when goaded beyond human endurance, but it passed in a moment and he would never sulk.

There are many people who have the capacity for making friends. A. J. was one of these. But he possessed the very rare capacity of being able to keep the friends he made. Not that he made friends easily. He disliked fools and bores, even those of the opposite sex, and he realized as few people do, that it is easier to make friends with such people than to get rid of them. He had a truly amazing memory for names and faces, and at meetings of the Wine and Food Society at which three or four hundred people might be gathered he would always know whether any particular person was a member or a guest; and if a member what name he or she went by.

In other respects, too, his memory was remarkable. His brother Julian has spoken of the long poems which he knew by heart. And he was a perambulating Dictionary of Quotations. He was not interested in foreign languages and never tried to learn any. He did, however, master French and German technical terms connected with books and food and wine and musical boxes, and other subjects which interested him.

A. J.'s death really came as a blow to a great many people. There were so many subjects upon which he was the best person to consult. Did one want a bottle of wine, a motor-car, or a house in Essex, one immediately rang up A. J. And he always knew where to find people following the queerest and most obscure professions, whose services one might only need once in a lifetime. On one occasion I lost the key of the highly-complicated lock of a travelling jewel-case. I was particularly anxious not to break it open, and the makers of the lock firmly assured me that nothing but a crowbar could open it. So I rang up A. J. and two days later aurtive-looking person wearing a dark suit and a bowler hat and carrying a small black bag appeared at my house. And in two minutes forty-three seconds by stop-watch he had opened the case, charged me a guinea and gone. I often wonder where A. J. got him: I could almost fancy I could see a black mask and a jemmy

sticking out of his pocket! Another example of this capacity of his was in connexion with his musical box collection. A great many of the boxes were broken when he acquired them, and therefore of no value at all. But he somehow managed to discover and chain to his chariot wheel the only man in England who could mend the cylinders and combs of musical boxes and put them in perfect working order.

I have said nothing about A. J.'s passion for games to which his brother Julian has referred. In his house he kept the apparatus for playing almost any indoor game. He particularly liked games which had disappeared from modern life. One of these was a game called Squailes, a combination of shove-ha'penny and bowls of this game he was undisputed champion. His table-tennis was really good, as he had studied the game very thoroughly and was coached by his brother Maurice, who was at one time, and indeed probably still is, one of the six best players in England. Another favourite game of his was croquet. But not croquet as played at Roehampton. It was played on an undulating lawn with a set of early-Victorian balls and mallets and hoops, including a double hoop with a bell hanging from the centre.

A. J. was responsible for the publication of a large number of books. The First Edition Club alone published about twenty books, and he saw many others through the press. Apart from the *Quest for Corvo* the only works of his that appeared in book form were *Emin: the Governor of Equatoria*, published in 1928, and *H. M. Stanley*, published in 1933. But he wrote many articles on Architecture and Bibliography, most of which will be well worth publishing in collected form in the near future. He also produced the most charming anthology of the *Poems of the 'Nineties*. He left a quantity of unfinished work, including a *Life of Oscar Wilde*, upon which he had been working for at least twelve years: he had indeed, done most of the research work and was really waiting for an opportunity to pull the whole thing together. This was to have been his magnum opus and he always declared that he was going to throw an entirely different light upon the subject.

The 'nineties fascinated him, and he made it his business to know all about their history and their literature. He modelled himself upon the 'nineties and regretted that he had not lived then. In his house at Finchfield he could let his taste for Victorianism have full play. There was no gas or electric light in the house. Four

oster beds and log fires faced one another across the bedrooms. There were musical boxes in every room; even the bathroom was littered with them, and a cupboard leading from it was lined with shelves upon which the more neglected offshoots of his library were regularly steamed. Irises and lupins crowded upon the flower-beds. There were two cats. A. J. had a healthy dislike of dogs.

The last time I saw A. J. was during three days which I spent with him at his house in Finchfield towards the end of June of this year. The country was revelling in a heat-wave, and A. J. spent most of his time basking in the sun. He appeared to tire very easily, but he was full of plans for the future and was confident that his health would improve gradually and that one day he would be completely recovered. So that it was a great blow to me to hear, a week or two later, that he had a relapse. He died peacefully in his sleep during the night of August 25, 1941; when he was thought to be well on the way to making a recovery. He was buried in a corner of the Finchfield churchyard; in spite of the difficulties of war-time transport, his friends gathered from all over the country to pay their last tributes to him.

He was something from an earlier age, and he managed to combine a number of incompatible qualities in himself. A dandy, a bookworm, a *bon-viveur*, an open-air enthusiast, and a lover of the intricacies and complicated involutions of life. He will be remembered in the future by his *Quest for Corvo*, but I think he will be remembered in the present mostly for his wit, his geniality and his conviviality, and for being the last survival of, or, rather, a throw-back to the 'nineties. He will be greatly missed. He wrote his own epitaph for me once, based upon his initials:

AJAS

ALAS

I little thought then that I should ever have to use it for the purpose for which it was conceived, and that I should be writing about him in the past instead of he writing about me, as we had often planned between us.

VYVYAN HOLLAND

BEN NICHOLSON

NOTES ON ABSTRACT ART

ABOUT abstract art: I have not yet seen it pointed out that this liberation of form and colour is closely linked with all the other liberations one hears about. I think it ought, perhaps, to come into one of our lists of war-aims. After all, every movement of human life is affected by form and colour, everything we see, touch, think and feel is linked up with it, so that when an artist can use these elements freely and creatively it can be a tremendously potent influence in our lives. The power, for instance, to create space (not 'literary' space but actual space) is surely invaluable. I think, too, that so far from 'constructivist', or so-called 'abstract' art, being the withdrawal of the artist from reality (into an 'ivory tower') it has brought art once again into common every-day life—there is evidence of this in its common spirit with and influence on many things like contemporary architecture, aeroplanes, cars, refrigerators, typography, publicity, electric torches, lipstick holders, etc. But like all the more profound religious, poetic, scientific, musical or artistic ideas its deepest meaning is only understood by a few and the process seems to be that these interpret it to a few more who pass it on to the rest of the world who unconsciously incorporate it in their lives. A Raphael is not a painting in the National Gallery—it is an active force in our lives.

It was interesting that during an exhibition of abstract work which I held in London several people in different professions wrote saying that they felt a common bond between their job and mine: a yacht designer, for instance, wrote that it was a hair's breadth in design which decided the pace or lack of pace in a yacht and that it seemed to be this same hair's breadth in design which decided the power or lack of power in relief. These people were getting at the roots of the matter far more than those critics who were concerned as to whether they were works of art, and if so why (at first sight) they were so unlike the work of Tintoretto. One can say that the problems dealt with in 'abstract' art are related to the interplay of forces

and therefore that any solution reached has a bearing on all interplay between forces: it is related to Arsenal v. Tottenham Hotspur quite as much as to the stars in their courses. I think the recent liberation of the powerful forces of form and colour is an important event, and when critics announce or foretell the death of abstract art they show the same misunderstanding of the freedom of form and colour as the dictators do of the freedom of the individual: putting an end to the liberty of either is, however, a hopeless job, right from the start, as there is only one way of doing so—by putting an end not only to the human race but to every other form of life.

Many people expect one kind of art to exclude all others, but I don't see why all the different forms can't proceed—there is a place for 'Constructivism', for 'Superrealism', for 'literary' painting, for descriptive records, etc. . . . though since 'constructivist' art is painting and sculptural expression free and undiluted, it must have a greater potency because it, alone, can develop the full available power.

A great deal of painting and sculpture to-day is concerned with the imitation of life, with the imitation of a man, a tree or a flower instead of using colour and form to create its *equivalent* in paint, (no one will ask what a tree is supposed to represent and yet, with the most innocent expression in the world, they will ask what a painting or a sculpture or a construction in space is supposed to represent). This equivalent must be conceived within the terms of the medium, it must be pure painting and sculptural expression, since the introduction of anything extraneous, like nature, into these other mediums means that the conception is adulterated and, therefore, can no longer have a complete application to other forms of life.

The abstract-superrealists, in order to achieve an extra contrast or 'drama', will superimpose a naturalistic or unresolved eye or breast on to an 'abstract' form, but surely true 'drama' can, also, only be solved in terms of the medium? We set ourselves a more difficult problem but I can quite understand that without all these heads, breasts, eyes, spiders and sexual organs—lifted from nature—our solution must seem to them singularly sterile! Another school of artists is concerned with the imitation of the post-impressionists, but to paint to-day as Cezanne and Seurat did in the 'nineties is to show a complete misunderstanding of the

real revolutionary discoveries contained in their work—magnificent idea becomes stagnant in their hands instead of generating further life. The 'Cubists' in 1908 understood these discoveries and took the next revolutionary step, but the Bloomsbury artist, so far from understanding the importance of 'Cubism', one of the big historical movements in painting, is to-day still grappling with the 90's. The 'Constructivist' movement has grown out of 'Cubism' and comes in a direct line from 'Post-Impressionism'. There is an excellent and authentic history of 'Cubism and Abstract Art' (up to 1936) and their origins by Alfred Barr, published by the Museum of Modern Art, New York, which everyone interested in contemporary painting and sculpture should read.

One of the main differences between a representational and an abstract painting is that the former can transport you to Greece by a representation of blue skies and seas, olive trees and marble columns, but in order that you may take part in this you will have to concentrate on the painting, whereas the abstract version by its free use of form and colour will be able to give you the actual quality of Greece itself, and this will become a part of the light and space and life in the room—there is no need to concentrate, *it becomes a part of living.*

In painting a 'still-life' one takes the simple every-day forms of a bottle—mug—jug—plate on table as the basis for the expression of an idea: the forms are not entirely free though they are free to the extent that each object can be seen from as many viewpoints as you wish at one and the same time, but the colours are free: bottle-colour for plate, plate-colour for table, or just as you wish, and working in this way you have in time not a still-life of objects but an equivalent of something much more like deep passing through a winter forest, over foothills and mountains through sunlight and shadows in Arizona, Cornwall or Provence and so, inevitably, you eventually discard altogether the forms of even the simplest objects as a basis, and work out your idea, not only in free colour, but also in free form. To most people this development must sound easy, but, for example, although I made my first 'abstract' painting in 1923 it wasn't till 1933 that I was able to establish this development. At first the circles were freely drawn and the structure loose with accidental textures, later I valued more the direct contact that could be obtained by flat planes of colour made and controlled to an exact pitch and the greater



BEN NICHOLSON
Relief 1934 (Martin Collection)



BEN NICHOLSON
Painting 1932

ension obtainable by the use of true circles and rectangles—the superficial appeal became less, but the impact of the idea more direct and therefore more powerful. The geometrical forms used by ‘constructivist’ artists do not indicate, as has been thought, a conscious and intellectual, mathematical approach—a square or a circle in art are nothing in themselves and are alive only in the instinctive and inspirational use an artist can make of them in expressing a poetic idea. If you take a large ultramarine blue and a small cadmium red square and place them on a cool white surface along with a pencilled circle, you can create a most exciting tension between these forces, and if at any time this tension becomes too exciting you can easily, by the smallest mark made by a compass in its centre, transfix the circle like any butterfly!

In a recent number of *Horizon* Grahame Greene, in an article on Read, mentions ‘a decoration of wires with little balls attached dangling from the ceiling’ and suggests, I think, that this is some strange kind of new fashion with no bearing on art. The first time I encountered a Calder (such as this) was in Paris some years ago when I borrowed one and hung it from the centre of the ceiling of a white room overlooking the Seine, and at night, with the river glistening outside, this mobile object turned slowly in the breeze in the light of an electric bulb hung near its centre—a large black, six white and one small scarlet ball on their wires turned slowly in and out, around, above and below each other, with their shadows chasing round the white walls in an exciting interchanging movement, suddenly hastening as they turned the corners and disappearing, as they crossed the window, into the night—it was alive like the hum of the city, like the passing river and the smell of Paris in early spring, but it was not a work of art as so many people think of a work of art—imprisoned in a gold frame or stone-dead on a pedestal in one of our marble-pillared mausoleums. But it was ‘alive’ and that, after all, is not a bad qualification for a work of art.

About space-construction: I can explain this by an early painting I made of a shop-window in Dieppe, though, at the time, this was not made with any conscious idea of space but merely using the shop-window as a theme on which to base an imaginative idea. The name of the shop was ‘Au Chat botté’, and this set going a train of thought connected with the fairy tales of my childhood and, being in French, and my French

being a little mysterious, the words themselves had also an abstract quality—but what was important was that this name was printed in very lovely red lettering on the glass window—*giving one plane*—and in this window were reflections of what was behind me as I looked in—*giving a second plane*—while through the window objects on a table were performing a kind of ballet and forming the ‘eye’ or life-point of the painting—*giving a third plane*. These three planes and all their subsidiary planes were interchangeable so that you could not tell which was real and which unreal, what was reflected and what unreflected, and this created, as I see now, some kind of space or an imaginative world in which one could live.

The same process takes place in making an abstract painting or an abstract relief, where, for instance, as the simplest example—you can take a rectangular surface and cut a section of it one plane lower and then in the higher plane cut a circle deeper than, but without touching, the lower plane. *One is immediately conscious that this circle has pierced the lower plane without having touched it*—even a dog or a cat will realize this instantly—and this creates space. The awareness of this is felt subconsciously and it is useless to approach it intellectually, as this, so far from helping, only acts as a barrier. This language is comprehensible to anyone who doesn’t set up barriers—the dog and cat set up no barriers and their eyes, whiskers and tails are alive, without restriction, but the whiskers of an intellectual do not give off the necessary spark, and contact cannot be made.

I think that so far from being a limited expression, understood by a few, abstract art is a powerful, unlimited and universal language.

WILLIAM SANSOM

THE LONG SHEET

HAVE you ever wrung dry a wet cloth? Wrung it bone white dry—with only the grip of your fingers and the muscles of your arms? If you have done this, you will understand better the situation of the captives at Device Z when the warders set them the task of the long sheet.

You will remember how, having stretched the cloth between our hands, you begin by twisting one end—holding the other firmly so that the water is corkscrewed from its hiding place. At first the water spurts out easily, but later you will find yourself screwing with both hands in different directions, whitening your knuckles, straining every fibre of your diaphragm—and all to extract the smallest drop of moisture! The muscle of your arm swells like an egg—yet the wet drop remains a pinhead! As you work, the cloth will gradually change from a grey colour to the whiteness of dried bone, yet even then the cloth will be wet! Still you will knot your muscles; still you will wrench away at the tortive damp. Then—at last!—you will believe the cloth to be dry . . . but in the next second the tip of a finger will quiver magically as it touches some cold, hidden veil of damp clinging deep down in the interlaced threads.

Such, then, was the task of the captives.

They were placed in a long steel box of a room with no windows and no doors. The room was some six feet wide and six feet high, but it ran one hundred feet in length. It resembled thus a rectangular tunnel with no entrance and no exit, yet the sensation inside was not really that of a tunnel. For instance, a quantity of light flowed through thick glass panels set at intervals along the ceiling; these were the skylights, and through these the captives had been dropped into the box. Again, the impression of living in a tunnel was offset by a system of cubicle walls that separated the captives into groups. These cubicle walls were made from the same riveted steel as the main walls: there was no communication from cubicle to cubicle except through a half-foot of space left between the top of the wall and the ceiling. Thus each group of captives occupied, as it were, a small room. There were twenty-two captives. They were grouped in unequal number within four cubicles.

Through the entire length of this system, raised three feet from the ground, passing through the very centre of each room, ran a long wound sheet. It was made from coarse white linen bundled to a loose cylinder of cloth some six inches in diameter.

When the captives were first thrown into their cubicles, the long sheet was heavy with water. The warders had soaked the material so thoroughly that in the folds the water had gathered into lakes. The warders then issued their instructions. The captives

were to wring the sheet dry. It would not do to wring the sheet: what we would normally call a 'dry' state—as of clothes ready for airing. On the contrary—this sheet must be purged of *every* moisture. It must be wrung as dry as a bone. This, the warders concluded, might take a long time. It might even take months of hard work. In fact, they had taken special care to treat the linen so that it would be durable over a lengthy period. But when the task was finally completed, then the men and women would be granted their freedom. They would be released.

As the grave faces of the warders disappeared and the glass skylights slid shut, the captives smiled for the first time. For months they had lived with the fear of death, they had shrunk from ceaseless apprehension of the terrible devices that awaited them. And now that future had devolved into the wringing of a simple sheet! A long sheet, it was true, but child's play in comparison with what they had expected. Thus they sank to the steel floor in relief. Few laid a hand on the sheet that day.

But after three months the captives began to realize the true extent of their task. By this time each group in each cubicle had wrung the worst water from their section of the sheet. Yet with all their sweating and straining they could not rid the cloth of its last dampness.

It was apparent that the warders had no intention of presenting them with a simple task. For, through vents near the roof, hot steam was injected mechanically into the cubicles as long as daylight lasted. This steam naturally moistened the sheet afresh. The steam was so regulated that it hindered rather than prevented the fulfilment of the wringing. Thus there was always less steam entering than moisture wrung from the sheet at a normal rate of working. The steam injection merely meant that for every ten drops of water wrung seven new drops would settle upon the sheet, so that eventually the captives would still be able to wring the sheet dry. This device of the warders was introduced solely to complicate the task. It seemed that the warders were acting in two ways; daily they encouraged the efforts of the captives with promises of release, but daily they turned on the steam cocks.

In the cubicles the air was thick with steam. It was the air of a laundry, where steam catches in the throat, where it is sometimes difficult to breathe, where the smell of hot, wet cloth sickens the

part. The steel walls sweated. Condensed water trickled ininding trails down the grey plate. Beads of moisture clustered at the rivet heads. The long sheet spattered a few drops into the ntral gutter in the floor as the captives twisted against time. Both men and women worked half naked. Since the sheet was positioned three feet from the ground they were forced to stoop. They sat at their work, then their arms grew numb in the raised titude at which they had to be maintained. There was nothing r it but to stoop. In the hot air they sweated, yet they dared ot lean over the sheet for fear their sweat should fall on the ungly cloth. Their muscles knotted, their backs cried out they twisted. The end was far, but there was an end. That meant that there was hope. This knowledge lent fire to e struggling ambition that lived in their human hearts. hey worked.

Yet some were not always equal to the task.

ROOM THREE—THOSE WHO SOUGHT OUTSIDE

There were four rooms. Take room three. This housed five people—two married couples and a young Serbian grocer. All ve of them wanted freedom. They worked earnestly at their task. hat the task was in essence unproductive did not worry them. t least, it would produce their freedom. It was thus artificially oductive. These five people set about the problem in a normal usiness-like way. Previously, they had been used to habitual ours, a life of steady formula. This they now applied to the new usiness of wringing. Set hours were allotted to each person. as was as if they commuted regularly from their suburbia he steel sleeping corner) to the office (the long sheet). hey worked in relays, in four-hour stretches throughout the y and night.

However, as I have said, they were not equal to the task. The amework of habit overcame them. Like so many who live ithin a steady, comfortable routine, they allowed the routine ound the work to predominate in importance above the work elf. They arrived at the long sheet punctually, and with con- ences thus satisfied they put insufficient effort into the actual ork. Furthermore, when they had fulfilled the routine assidu- sly for a period, one or the other would congratulate his con- ence and really believe that he deserved a 'little' relaxation',

and he would take the afternoon off. Such was the force of his emphasis on obedience to the letter that he was convinced the law would not suffer. Thus the real work of wringing suffered. New moisture crept in where his hands were weak. These people had set about the quest for freedom in the right way, but they were unhappily convinced of their righteousness.

Sometimes one or other of the couples would lie down together on the sweating steel plates. They would make love: the steam misted their bodies with false perspirations. One of the women became pregnant. Her child was born in the steam box. But, under the influence of Room Three's routine, that child could never be free. The influence, the constriction and the hopeless task of the parents would keep the child in the steam box for life. The child would never have the chance to learn to wring with effect.

ROOM TWO — THOSE WHO SOUGHT IN AND OUT AND AROUND

In another of the rooms—Room Two—there were five men. Their names and their professions do not matter. It is how they attacked the long sheet that matters. They attacked it in five different ways.

Here were five individualists, five who were forced by the set of their minds to approach their problems in various ways of their own. Day after day they laboured in the hot, damp steel cubicle, each twisting the long cylinder of cloth with different reasonings.

One man had been frightened by a sheet when he was young. On some indefinite day of his childhood, a new nurse had appeared. Her black eyes had burned with a powerful scorn; her small lascivious teeth and huge drooping cheeks had threatened him in the candlelight. On her first day the new nurse had made a little white monster from a white sheet. It had two little heads and a shapeless, flowing body. The little heads were sharp, and always bobbing. The nurse had come silently into the night nursery when it was dark. Lighting a candle on the floor behind the end of the bed, she had quietly raised her little white monster so that the boy could just see it above his toes. Then she had begun a strident sing-song crowing, like the harsh crowing of Punch

boy had awoken to this sound, and had seen the sharp
bing heads of the little monster.

Now, some thirty years later, the man has forgotten the scene,
somehow his hands cannot touch the long sheet without a
t sensation of uneasiness. His hands do not touch the white
h well. Consequently, he is forever making excuses to avoid
king on the sheet. He feigns illness. He offers to clear up the
ement of all the others. He has mutilated his hands. He has
mpted to make love with the other four men to avoid the
ty of the sheet. Oh, there is no end to the devices the fellow
invented from his sadness! But whatever he does cannot
icate the awful uneasiness that clouds the far reaches of his
d. At the moment of writing, this man is still in the steel
cle. He will never be free.

Another of the men in Room Two was a simple quiet fellow.
Others took no interest in him, he was too simple a fellow.
a most amazing thing—his section of the sheet was white and
e dry! There was a good reason for this. Without any con-
is knowledge, without planning and scheming, he had
rally gone at his wringing the good way. He was accustomed
ing sitting astride the cloth. In this position, his legs squeezed
e cloth too. Thus, without questioning, he surrendered his
e body to the task. His heart, too, for he was such a simple
w. This man's sheet was dry. But the others never even
ced. He was such a simple fellow.

There was one man in Room Two whose metier in life had
ys been the short cut. As previously in business, in love, in all
ionships, he attempted to apply the short cut system to the
t important task of all—the wringing of the long sheet. He
out a great many tricks and petty deceptions. He blocked up
pipe through which the guards pumped the steam. The next
ning, like a mushroom, another pipe had grown at the side of
rst. He tried feigning madness. The warders threw buckets of
water down through the skylight. Some of this water
hed on to the sheet, destroying a whole month's work. The
t men nearly killed him for this. Once he bribed one of the
ers to send him a pot of white enamel. With this he painted
heet white. The enamel dried hard. The sheet seemed dry!
The next day the warders came to chip the enamel off. They
hed him with a travelling hose-jet. This jet travelled

inconsequentially about the room. To save the water hitting the sheet, the man had to intercept the jet with his body. He was kept running and jumping and squatting for a whole day—until towards evening he dropped exhausted and rolled into the central gutter. The warders, of course, can never be bribed.

Then there was another man who can best be described as a fumbler. He worked hard and earnestly. He was up at the wringing well before the others, he seldom lay down till long after the skylights were dark and the air cleared of steam. But he fumbled. His mind co-ordinated imperfectly with his body. Although he felt that he concentrated his whole effort, psychic and physical, on the job of wringing—his mind would wander to other things. He might know that this happened, but his hands did. They stopped wringing, they wrung the wrong way—and the fatal drop of moisture accumulated. He could never understand this. He thought his mind was always on the job. But instead his mind settled too often on matters only near to the job, not the job's essence. For a small instance—his mind might wander to the muscle on his left forearm. He might see that it bulges at a downward screw of the wet linen. He watches this bulge as he works. The bulge then absorbs his interest to such an extent that he makes greater play with this left arm to stimulate further the bulging muscle. In compensation the right arm slackens its effort. The wringing becomes uneven and inefficient. Yet all this time the man himself in honesty believes that he is concentrating upon his job. The muscle is, in fact, part of the job. Yet it is only a facet, not the full perspective. He fumbles because he does not see clearly: to wring dry the long sheet a man must give his whole thought to it in calm and complete clarity.

The fifth man in Room Two was a good worker: that is, he had found the way to wring effectively, and at times his portion of the sheet was almost dry. But he was perverted. This man would wring the sheet almost dry—then stand by and watch the sheet settle into the folds once more! He liked to watch the fruits of his labour rot. In this way he freed himself from the task. He freed himself by attaining his object, and then treating it with the contempt he imagined it deserved. He felt himself master of the work; in reality he never became the master of his true freedom. There was no purity in this man. His freedom was false.

ROOM FOUR—THOSE WHO NEVER SOUGHT AT ALL
Room Number Four housed more captives than the others. Even people were crowded into this one cell of steam and steel. There were three women, one girl of twelve, and three men. These people seldom did much work. They were a source of great disappointment to the warders. To these people the effort was not worth eventual freedom. The immensity of the task had long ago disheartened them. Their minds were not big enough to envisage a better future. They had enough. They had their breeding and their food. The state of life held no interest for them. Vaguely, they would have preferred better conditions. But at the cost of toil and thought—no. These people were squalid and small. Their desire for freedom had been killed by a dull acceptance of their impotence. This also became true of the little girl of twelve. She had no alternative but to follow the others.

The warders never played their favourite trick on Room Four, for the simple reason that the trick would have had no effect. The trick was to release into the cells small squadrons of saturated birds. The birds flew into the cells and scattered water from their wings everywhere. The birds flew in all directions and the captives ran wildly here and there in hysterical efforts to trap them before they splashed water on to the sacred sheet. The warders considered that the element of chance implicit in these birds was a healthy innovation. Otherwise, life for the captives would have been too ordered. There must be risk, said the warders. And so from time to time, with no warning, they injected these little wet birds and the captives hastened to protect the purity of their work against the interference of fate. If they could not catch the birds in time, they learnt in this manner how to accept misfortune: and with patience they redoubled their efforts to retrieve the former level of their work.

But into Room Four the birds never flew. The trick would never have affected the inhabitants, who lived at the low ebb of misfortune already. Perhaps the real tragedy of these dispirited people was not their own misfortune, to which they had grown accustomed, but that their slackness had its effect on those whose ambitions were pure and strong. The slackness was contagious. In this way. The sheet was so wet in Room Four that the water seeped through into Room One. And in Room One lived the most successful of all the captives.

ROOM ONE—THOSE WHO SOUGHT INSIDE

There were five of them in cubicle One. Four men and woman. They were successful no more for their method of wringing than for their attitude towards wringing. At first, when they had been dropped through the skylight, when they saw the long sheet, when they slowly accustomed themselves to the idea of what lay before them, they were profoundly shocked. Unlike the others, they thought death preferable to such senseless unproductive labour. But they were good people. Soon they went beyond the apparent drudgery. Soon they had passed through and rejected the various phases experienced and retained by the other rooms. They had known the defeat of Room Four, the individual terrors and escapes of Room Two, the veneer of vitality beneath which the inhabitants of Room Three purred with self-satisfying alarming satisfaction. No, it was not so very long before these good people saw beyond the apparent and thenceforth set themselves to work with body and soul, gently but with strength and humbly yet fearlessly, towards the only end of value—freedom.

First, these people said 'Unproductive? The long sheet and senseless drudgery? Yes—but why not? In whatever other sphere of labour could we ever have produced ultimately anything? It is not the production that counts, but the life lived in the spirit during production. Production, the tightening of the muscles, the weaving of the hands, the pouring forth of shaped material—this is only an employment for the nervous body, the dyed-in-the-wool legacy of the hunter's will to movement. Let the hands weave, at the same time let the spirit search. Give the long sheet its rightful place—and concentrate on a better understanding of freedom that is our real object'.

At the same time, they saw to it that the sheet was wrung efficiently. They arranged a successful rota system. They tried various methods and positions with their hands. Examining every detail, they selected in every way the best approach. They did not overtax themselves. They did not hurry themselves. They worked with a rhythmic resilience, conserving this energy for the exertion of that. They allowed no extremes. They applied themselves with sincerity and a good will.

Above all they had faith. Their attitude was broad—but led in one direction. Their endeavour was freedom. They feared neither work nor weakness. These things did not exist for them; the

existence was a material through which they could achieve, by calm and sensitive understanding, the goal of perfect freedom.

Gradually these people achieved their end. In spite of the steam, in spite of the saturated birds, in spite of the vaporous contagion seeping through from the room of the defeated, in spite of the long hours and the heat and the squared horizon of rusting steel—their spirit prevailed and they achieved the purity they sought. One day, seven years later, the wet grey sheet dawned a bright white—dry as desert ivory, dry as marble dust.

They called up through the skylight to the warders. The grave faces appeared. Coldly the warders regarded the white sheet. There were nods of approbation.

‘Freedom?’ said the captives.

The guards brought out their great hoses and doused the white sheet sodden grey with a huge pressure of water.

‘You already have it,’ they answered. ‘Freedom lies in an attitude of the spirit. There is no other freedom.’ And the skylights silently closed.

AUGUSTUS JOHN

FRAGMENT OF AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY—V

AFTER the death of John Sampson, I was summoned to North Wales to assist at the ceremony of the disposal of his ashes upon a mountain-side in accordance with the terms of his Will. I travelled with Stephen Tomlin, the sculptor, who was always ready to make a journey anywhere and at any time. Some hundreds of people had assembled, among them Professors Oliver Elton, Garmon Jones and other representatives of Liverpool University. With a band of Welsh gypsies, carrying their instruments, which included a heavy ‘triple harp’, we ascended the mountain-side and at last, much exhausted, reached the appointed place. Here it devolved on me to conduct the Rites which had been drawn up in

the Welsh dialect of Romani, winding up with the Rai's valedictory verses to Francis Hindes Groome, beginning '*Romani Raia, p'rala: junimangero, Konyo cūmerava to čikat*'. This I succeeded in accomplishing without fault. Sampson's son, Michael, then scattered the ashes. The gypsies having ritually burnt the box in which these had been conveyed, now struck up some lively Welsh airs and the ceremony concluded. I have sometimes wondered what manner of crop sprang from this sowing, but have never revisited the scene.

I first saw the west of Ireland as the guest of Francis Macnamara, poet, philosopher and financial expert. My friend had assumed perhaps too early the cumbersome mantle of sage, but would sometimes divest himself of this, together with his messianic responsibilities, and warmed by what he called 'the hard stuff' became popular, genial, and even, as the police were apt to think, dangerous. Though I preferred his company during these light-hearted intervals I respected, though I could not share his more habitual mood of detached and gloomy cogitation. As the squire of Ennistymon it was sometimes with hesitation that he allowed himself to be persuaded to accompany me to the little 'shebeen', of the village of Fisher Street, to hear Mary Shannon sing or declaim old Irish songs and sagas, though it was he who first introduced me to her. This accomplished woman, though no longer in her first youth, beat all the local colleens at dancing, and with her tongue and memory was more than a match for any man. Treated with consideration by everybody as a personage apart, I never understood her status in society till Francis confided to me the secret of her true position as the surviving priestess of Pagan and a forbidden cult. . .

An expedition to the southernmost of the Aran Islands in native *curragh* was not completed without its accompaniment of risk, for a storm overtaking us on returning, we all had to take turn at the oars, but the frail canoe slid smoothly on the surface of the waves and, expertly managed, at last was brought to shore safely near Doolin.

On another occasion we visited the North Island, but this time by means of the steamship *Dun Angus*. We were fortunate to synchronize with a Mission conducted by two Jesuit Fathers. On their departure the entire population in their finest clothes gathered on the Strand to give the holy men a send-off. Enriched

by the sale of medals, pledges, badges, scapulas and what-not, the missionaries rewarded their faithful islanders in return with the blessing of the Pope himself. It was a grand spectacle. The Irish painter, Paul Henry, whom we met there, surveyed it with us.

The good Fathers had seized the opportunity of banning the *Patterne*, a pre-Christian festival at which it was customary to hold horse-races on the Strand. No doubt the stout flowed freely on this occasion, but it was the one holiday of the year, and I hope it has long since been restored. The Aran Islanders appeared to me to be a grave and dignified people, speaking English when necessary with slow deliberation and employing a rich Elizabethan vocabulary. Self-supporting and weaving their own garments, these remote heirs of a simpler age owed little to the amenities of modern industrialism which were already beginning to be in unsightly evidence on the mainland.

The tiny fields produced, from the thin soil which scarcely covered the shelving rock, good grass to nourish the island cattle. The smoke of burning kelp rose from the shores. Women and girls in black shawls and red or saffron skirts stood or moved in groups with a kind of nun-like uniformity and decorum. Upon the precipitous Atlantic verge some forgotten people had disputed a last foothold upon the ramparts of more than one astounding fortress. Formorians, Tuatha de Danaan, Firbolg—who on earth were they?

In the east the speckled mountains of Connemara ranged themselves in the series of 'The Twelve Pins', and to the north the sacred cone of Croagh Patrick pointed its apex above Westport.

Francis Macnamara, breaking away sometimes, as we have seen, from his reflections and the cares of a beautiful blond family, would harness his horse and trap and show me the country-side: Ennistymon, where stood his ancestral hall; Lisdoonvarna, with its forbidding hydro, resort of priests on holiday, who, I was informed, might here relax temporarily the strictness of their rule and hobnob sentimentally with scared colleens; Ballyvaughan of the sculptured cliffs, from whence across the glittering bay the cubes of Galway City might be seen to rise from the water in a pattern of grey and white.

With emotion I crossed over on the *Dun Angus* and stepped at last on the quays of the western capital. Tall warehouses, interspersed with pale-coloured dwellings, confronted across the

harbour the village of the Claddagh. This complex of white cabins, appearing to have sprung in a fairy-ring like mushrooms from the soil, has since been replaced, I hear, by a series of concrete and highly-sanitary barracks. Bevvies of shawled girls hurried past, laughing, as we explored the labyrinth of green streets, which resounded with the cries of cattle-drovers and fishwomen. Somewhere a voice, sweetened by distance, nostalgically wailed: 'Eileen allanah, Eileen asthore'. Black hookers lay by the wharves, among them Macnamara's newly-rigged *Mary Ann* 'a boon', as Gogarty used to say, 'to the local washerwomen'. In O'Flaherty's bar, by the New Dock, men of Aran would await their passage home, and sometimes Welsh seamen came in to refresh themselves after their voyage. In the dusk, shy figures seemed to be hiding among the fallen barks of the timber-yard without, and dark forms still lingered, murmuring, by the Spanish Gate; a face or part of a face blooming from shadowy veils and quickly averted.

The Claddagh looks insubstantial and dream-like in the half-light, but without a dream's precision. The waters of Corrib pour through the arches of the bridge, with the salmon wavering below in serried rows. Still more water bursts through the apertures of a broken mill. Lynch's Castle stands up aristocratically: a casket of fine carved stone. A Tinker girl with a black eye drunk, and of a Raphaelesque beauty, uttering in a sweet and bird-like voice, unintelligible *propos*, incessantly readjusts her shawl. Dick Innes' English accent, acquired at Llanelly, was becoming more and more exaggerated. God knows how or when he had appeared upon the scene, but we had certainly been, the three of us, to the races. The fishwives sit like queens or prophetesses over their stout. Winny Corcoran goes dodging down to the docks with her consumptive sister. The pale heavens darken over Oranmore as Mr. Heard, the D.I., taking a stroll, comes under the verbal fire of vainglorious patriots issuing from pubs. Ridiculing them scornfully, he proceeds on his way, swaggering.

Invited by Lady Gregory, I set out on a second visit to Ireland for the purpose of painting W. B. Yeats. On arriving at Dublin I entered a restaurant and ordered a meal. Having attended to my needs, a handsome waitress, seating herself at my table, inquired very civilly, my provenance, destination and business. I satisfied her curiosity on these points and some friendly conversation

ensued. Foreigner as I was, I felt now less uncomfortably so and left the young woman with reluctance. Orpen had advised me to get in touch with Oliver St. John Gogarty. Accordingly I sought and found the celebrated wit, surgeon and poet at Baillie's, a favourite resort of his. Gogarty, all agog with good humour, proved the best of cicerones, and lost no time in introducing me to the sights of the city and its neighbourhood. Though his ceaseless outpour of wit and wisdom was exhausting and the pace of intellectual Dublin rather fast for one uninured to its high standards, I was immensely entertained. It was, however, satisfactory to find myself alone at last in the train and speeding across the bogs to the west. J. N. Hone, Seamus O'Sullivan, Alabaster, Geo. Wm. Russell ('Æ'), Professor McCann, James Stephens, Padraic O'Collum, Provost Mahaffy, Lord Dunsany, President Cosgrave, Tim Healy, Count John McCormick, Compton Mackenzie, General Mulcahy; these were some of the outstanding figures I became acquainted with in those crowded Dublin days.

Lady Gregory's house at Coole, big and plain, stands in a well-wooded park, watered by a river, which flowing underground, appears at intervals on the surface; a charming lake, or *Turlough*, islanded, and mysteriously rising and subsiding, provided me with a handy means of escape, and many an hour I spent rowing idly on its placid waters, with only the swans, which Yeats had celebrated, for company. Yeats, slightly bowed and with his air of abstraction, walked in the garden every morning with Augusta Gregory, discussing literary matters. With a lank forelock falling over his russet brow, his myopic eyes and hieratic gestures, he looked every inch a twilight poet. He never joined her ladyship and me on our excursions, fearful, I suspect, being no great linguist, of encountering some Irish-speaking fairy; I met none of the *Sidhe* myself, but had seen pictures of them, painted on brown paper, by Russell in his rooms at Dublin. These I thought pretty though unconvincing. Æ's talk was better than his painting. To hear him in a disputation with George Moore was alone worth the journey.

Having produced several paintings and drawings of Yeats and a portrait of Augusta Gregory's grandson, I returned to England, or perhaps France. But I was to revisit Ireland more than once, and I had better stop there while I am about it, and leaving out the interval, will shift the scene for a moment back to Galway town.

As I have indicated, I found the old port rich in motives for a painter. One thing alone was lacking. A room or studio in which to work. I decided, therefore, to take a house, and eventually found a suitable one on the Tuam road. As this house belonged to some nuns, the Bishop's approval was needed before it could be let. Accordingly an interview was arranged, and I had the honour of meeting Bishop O'Dea, celebrated as the author of that remarkable phrase 'the disgusting passion of love'. Having inspected the house and myself, the distinguished cleric left, apparently satisfied with both, but expressed a hope before going that I wasn't going to paint the nude. The possibility of this had not occurred to me, but the agent appeared doubtful. Having taken the house for three years, with the help of Oliver and Mrs. Gogarty, I got a room or two partially furnished and passed a week there.

But now the war started. Men were entraining at the station, their women sending them off 'to fight England's battles', and there was much weird keening on the platform as the trains moved out. Returning to Coole I painted not one but three portraits of Shaw, who proved a sympathetic and intelligent sitter. Mrs. Shaw, too, was equally charming and friendly. I had the pleasure of taking her for a row on the lake now and then, and we all drove out to points of interest in the district, visiting Edward Martyn at Tillyra, Robert Gregory and his wife at Burren of the wild blue gentians (seen since only on the summit of the Sierra Nevada), the Round Tower, and the Seven Churches, Tyrone, Loughcoutra and Cong. Finally the Shaws and I set out for home together, motoring across Ireland, Wales and England. An accident which I had outside Dublin on the way back proved rather serious, for it crippled me for months, and has in fact troubled me recurrently ever since. Gogarty, who was an athlete, challenged me to jump a fence. But for tearing the seat of his pants, he got over successfully. I cleared the obstacle all right, but landing badly, put out a knee. The remainder of the journey was distinctly uncomfortable. I seem to have neglected entirely a period or periods when I stayed with Gogarty at Dalkey, with Joe Hone at Killiney, with Lord Dunsany at Dunsany, and with Cecil Baring on Ireland's Eye. But there's a good deal more to be said about Ireland anyhow, for I was repeatedly there since.

Travelling west with Provost Mahaffy once, I remarked that the character of the Connemara Mountains seemed to evoke the

landscape of the Heroic Age of Ireland. 'Oh, tut, tut, tut,' replied the Provost, 'what you see now are but the denuded skeletons of mountains which in the Heroic Age were covered with soil and thickly wooded.' 'Indeed, Sir,' said I, 'then how and when did the soil get up on them?' But the great Illuminate, with an impatient gesture, changed the subject. We were on a visit to Gogarty's house at Renvyle, once the habitation of a branch of the Blake tribe, and since converted by Gogarty into an hotel. Mahaffy, who had written an authoritative treatise on the Art of Conversation, displayed his accomplishment of an evening in a series of long, instructive and highly entertaining monologues, which even Gogarty, try as he might, was unable to interrupt. This wonderful man told me the following story as illustrating the faculty of poetic imagery to be met with so frequently among the lower orders of Connaught. An old fellow who used to row Mahaffy on the lake where he went fishing, having lost his master, was inconsolable. Mahaffy, seeing him so distressed, sought to comfort him, saying, 'Cheer up, man, you mustn't be so downhearted. Death comes to all.' 'Downhearted is it, your Honour; faith, my heart has sunk that low, ye could pick it out of my arse with a crooked pin.' I returned to Renvyle later and executed several portraits, including one or two of W. B. Yeats, now a mellow, genial and silver haired old man. Lord and Lady Longford had fetched him over to be painted. The conversation at dinner consisted of a succession of humorous anecdotes by Yeats, chiefly on the subject and at the expense of George Moore, punctuated by the stentorian laughter of his Lordship and the more discreet whinny of his accomplished wife. I was familiar with most of these stories already, or variants of them: for the Irish literary movement nourished itself largely on gossip, which as it went around gained at each telling an added lustre of wit and acerbity. My difficulties while painting Yeats were not lightened by the obligation of producing an appreciative guffaw at the right moment, and I fear my timing was not always correct. We were now joined in the hotel by the ladies Dorothea and Lettice Ashley-Cooper, and later by their sister Lady Alington, Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Scott, of Penn., U.S.A., and some other charming Americans: so I didn't lack models. The painter, Adrian Daintrey, was also of the party, with Harry Clifton, whose distinguished father, Talbot, I had met in Dublin, the turbulent

Ralph Peto and his son Timothy. The Gogartys were usually in attendance, Oliver keeping us up to the scratch. Under his orders a swim before breakfast was, wet or fine, compulsory. Besides Yeats I painted Hope Scott, Brenda Gogarty, his 'ugly duckling' as her father called her, unnecessarily I think; the Ashley-Cooper girls, and some landscapes. Lord and Lady Ossory came for a visit. The former asked me to Kilkenny Castle to give an opinion on his old masters, 'either Van Dycks or Van Eycks'; he wasn't sure. Having my car with me we roamed the country freely. By way of Maam Cross, where Mr. Peacock, the innkeeper, could be, perhaps, persuaded to take a drink with us, ('Another slate off the roof,' he would say, helping himself to a John Jameson), we proceeded over the moors to Lettermullen, a tidal island to the south, famed for its lobsters and *poteen*. The latter illicit beverage was consumed with milk in an upper chamber and comparative security. Having been presented to the venerable Mocky, king of the island, by Macnamara, we were treated as privileged and accorded diplomatic honours. Under the new dispensation Mocky's Still was, I heard, seized by the police and, greatly to his indignation, the immemorable industry was brought to a standstill. Tending northwards by the Killery harbour and past the noble hump of Mhuilrea which guards its entrance, we drove by Lenane to Westport, or to Cong of the charnel-house and abbey. I nearly became the possessor of a castle. On the borders of Lough Corrib, roofless and sheltering only cattle, its tall keep rose above the bend of a deep stream which flowed into the Lough. Quite uninhabitable, I could have got it for a song had not Gogarty let his incontrollable tongue wag, leading the owner to increase the price to an impossible figure. It was a beautiful place and its name took my fancy: *Auchmanure*.

My plans for painting Galway were thus frustrated. Back in England, I did, it is true, an immense cartoon, which summarized some aspects of it, and many drawings recorded impressions of its scene. If they haven't improved the place altogether I may go back yet. There must surely be a shawl or two left.

LETTER

To the Editor:

SIR,

I hoped that your article on OCTU's would deal seriously with the important problem of training responsible officers for the conscript army. I expected discussion of such questions as: How to train officers to fight a modern war, when they have not, but we hope will ultimately have, full modern equipment; From what age groups should officers be chosen; The rival merits of morale based on conditioned obedience and morale based on political education.

The Creation of a Class, however, was a confusion of personal unhappiness and social disillusion, sincere but unconstructive. Its attack on OCTU's was based on the fact that OCTU's do not train officers for a People's Army.

The British Army is not a People's Army and only a few second-rate journalists pretend that it is. Like all armies, the British is the reflection of the state it defends, showing clearly the divisions and conflicts latent in civilian society. If the author wishes to plead for a People's Army, the point of attack is not the OCTU (which is merely one process in military training), but the British Army and the authoritarian nature of our Government.

OCTU's must be judged by whether they succeed in doing what they set out to do, which is to select and train those most suitable to lead men in accordance with the present organization of the Army. They will only change when the Army changes, as there is evidence that it is changing at the moment, slowly, perhaps too slowly, and surely, but perhaps not surely enough.

Selection Boards do not make decisions about officer-material merely on the answers given to questions. They are concerned most with a man's confidence and bearing; the intangible qualities which command obedience and respect. Candidates are asked how much money they have privately, because officers often buy sports kit for their men out of their own money, official funds being small. Not having a private income is not a bar to becoming an officer, however. The question of games is also not so stupid as it looks. A man who plays games in civilian life is liable to be in better condition than one who doesn't. Furthermore, the technique of concerted dissimilar action that makes for good soccer is the

nearest civilian approach to the technique necessary in fighting

Cadets, says the author, are politically ignorant. The British people are politically the most uneducated in the world; but the standard of political education in the OCTU I attended was pretty high. About one in three was a socialist; and the socialists, who were graded according to their military abilities, came out higher than the non-political cadets. The instructors were all Tory, but they seemed to prefer socialist subalterns. The formation of an Army Bureau of Current Affairs means that the Army Council is at last taking political education of officers and men seriously.

OCTU's obviously vary in their conditions and training. But two things to which the author objects seem common to all. Firstly, the strict invigilation of cadets on and off parade by their instructors. This is unpleasant for the cadet, especially if he suffers from paranoia. But this scrutiny is surely necessary to ensure the safety and welfare of the thirty-two men whom the officer will command when he is a subaltern.

Secondly, cadets take turn and turn about as officers and N.C.O.s. The object of this is to give cadets experience in giving orders and in the jobs which have to be done by different officers. I have never heard of any cadet officer informing against another cadet. In fact, even where a cadet obviously ought never to become an officer, cadet-solidarity demands that it shall be an officer-instructor who finds him out.

I know, sir, that in printing articles like *The Creation of a Class* you wish to increase the efficiency of the Fighting Services. I hope that its unbalance will not confirm waverers in their opposition to change.

Yours, etc.,

ARTHUR CALDER-MARSHALL

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